

**The Following is a Presentation of Study
Embarked Upon During the Course of
Masters Degree of Fine Art**

**University of Tasmania
1988-1990
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**I Would Like to Thank My Family and Friends for Their
Continuing Support. I Would Also Like to Thank Don
Peacock for All His 'Good Ideas'.**

**Documentation for
Master of Fine Art**

Course Proposal

I feel that creative people carry with them their own characteristic theme aroused through experience which completes itself during the act of creation.

My objective is to research and comprehend the intricacies of and connections between various mythologies of existence, to investigate beyond the immediate significance of signs and beyond sub-cultural interpretations, and so move into the detailed fabric of meaning that our culture imposes.

I am interested in exploring the rhythms of life, death and decay in the physical world and the psychic world so that my perceptions have greater clarity. Coupled with fantasy and imagination, I want to make images that are able to elucidate not only my own personal truths, but illustrate a type of experience that is universal. This procedure leads me to greater awareness, but at the same time to the complexities of perception.

This means recognising failures in my communication which gives me impetus to learn and search for more effective expressions of the insights which come through experience.

Philosophy

I want to develop a firm grounding in philosophy which will involve a training in both sound argument and in assessing the validity of argument. I want to be able to apply this training in the critical assessment of my own ideas and hence my art.

I would like to develop my awareness on moral and political changes in relation to the individuals role in society through the ages including contemporary culture.

In the final year of my undergraduate studies at Victoria College, Prahran, I attended a series of seminars on art criticism and contemporary cultural theory and have some grounding in post-structuralism, a subject I wish to develop.

Mythology

I would like to research the myths and rituals of different cultures and their function in expressing that culture's needs and experience. This would allow me the opportunity to explore the life motivating and directing forces of these myths and their relationship to contemporary society. I believe this would be highly relevant to my work.

Psychology

I want to explore the common denominators of myths and inherited mythical archetypes and their influence on modern consciousness. I aim to create a dialogue utilizing symbolic forms created by the unconscious mind and recognized by the conscious, in continuous interaction with contemporary life.

Practical / Experimental

Utilizing practical experimentation I aim to explore the laws of Gestalt psychology. By acquiring a greater understanding of these laws (e.g. symmetry, proximity and similarity etc.), I can then choose to group them in a harmonious way, or to create a feeling of tension and dissonance, to camouflage or to force the viewer to a deeper consideration of the work.

By understanding the psychological, symbolic and emotional affects of formal elements, such as colour, shape, darkness and light, I aim to create layers of meaning that direct the viewer's mind to something beyond the work of art, to a meaning that has universal significance. I hope to show the viewer that the visible expressive elements of the images I produce represent a symbolic rather than a literal meaning.

As these two areas of study interact and reinforce each other, I hope to evolve new visual techniques to assist people toward an understanding and appreciation of our inward, as well as the world's outward order of facts in relation to the conditions of contemporary life.

~

To look at a photo is to see a picture and imagine the pictured...

....becoming and dissolving, between finite and infinite....

Series I

'UNTITLED'
1988

Series II

'UNTITLED'
1988

Series III

'UNTITLED'
1989-90

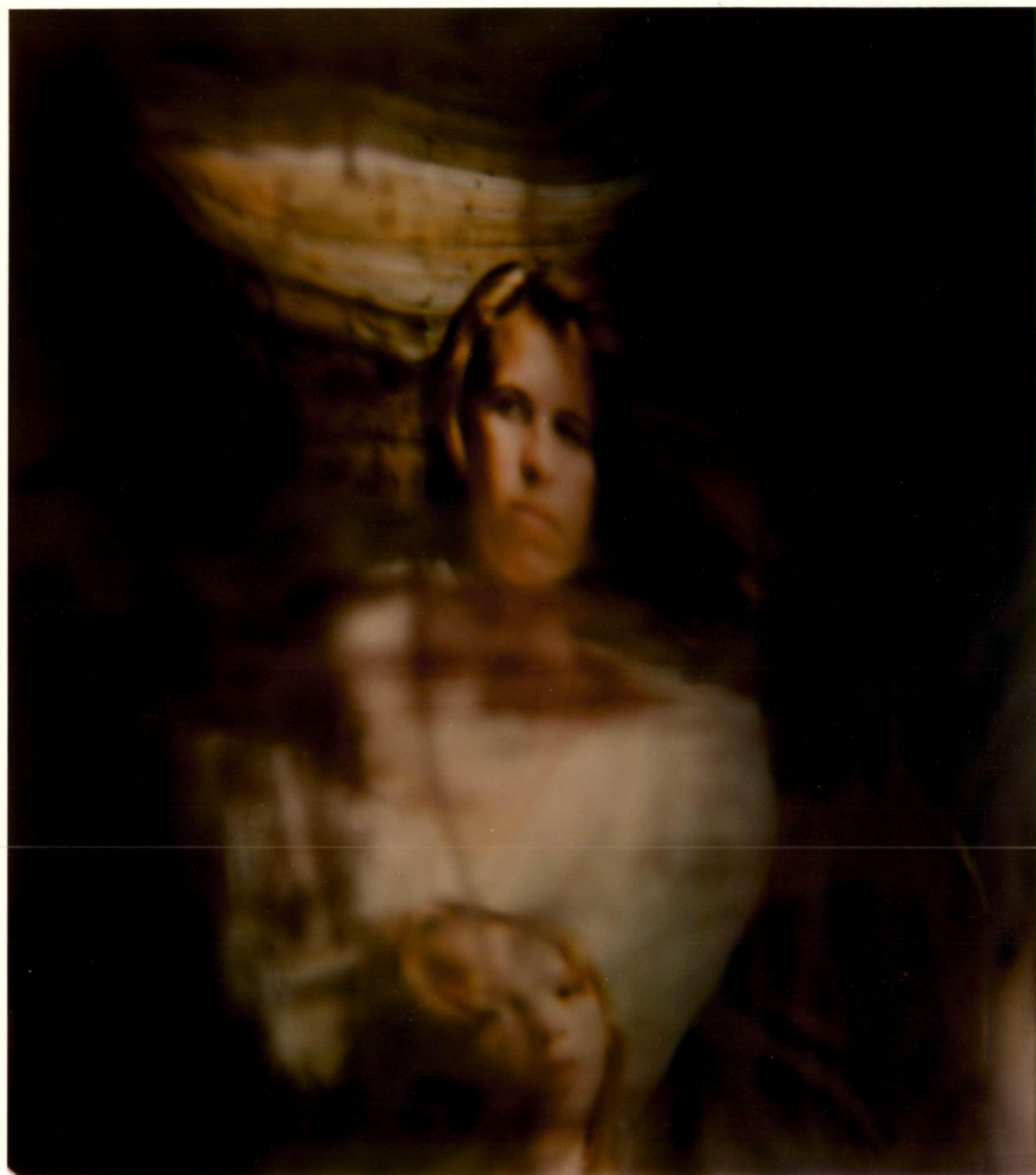
...that space within, separated from life, as well as death, where there is no separation of objects, no chronology, but a timelessness where eternity lies here inside, no division whatsoever, simply a series of circular motivations....

*The earth has huddled in fear like a child
and over its cradle chase the phantoms.*

Georg Buchner, 'Leonce und Lena'

*Thus life stretches between abandoned laughter and tears. And it is to do
with the difficulty of harmonizing rational calculation with those tears -
with that terrible laughter.*

George Bataille



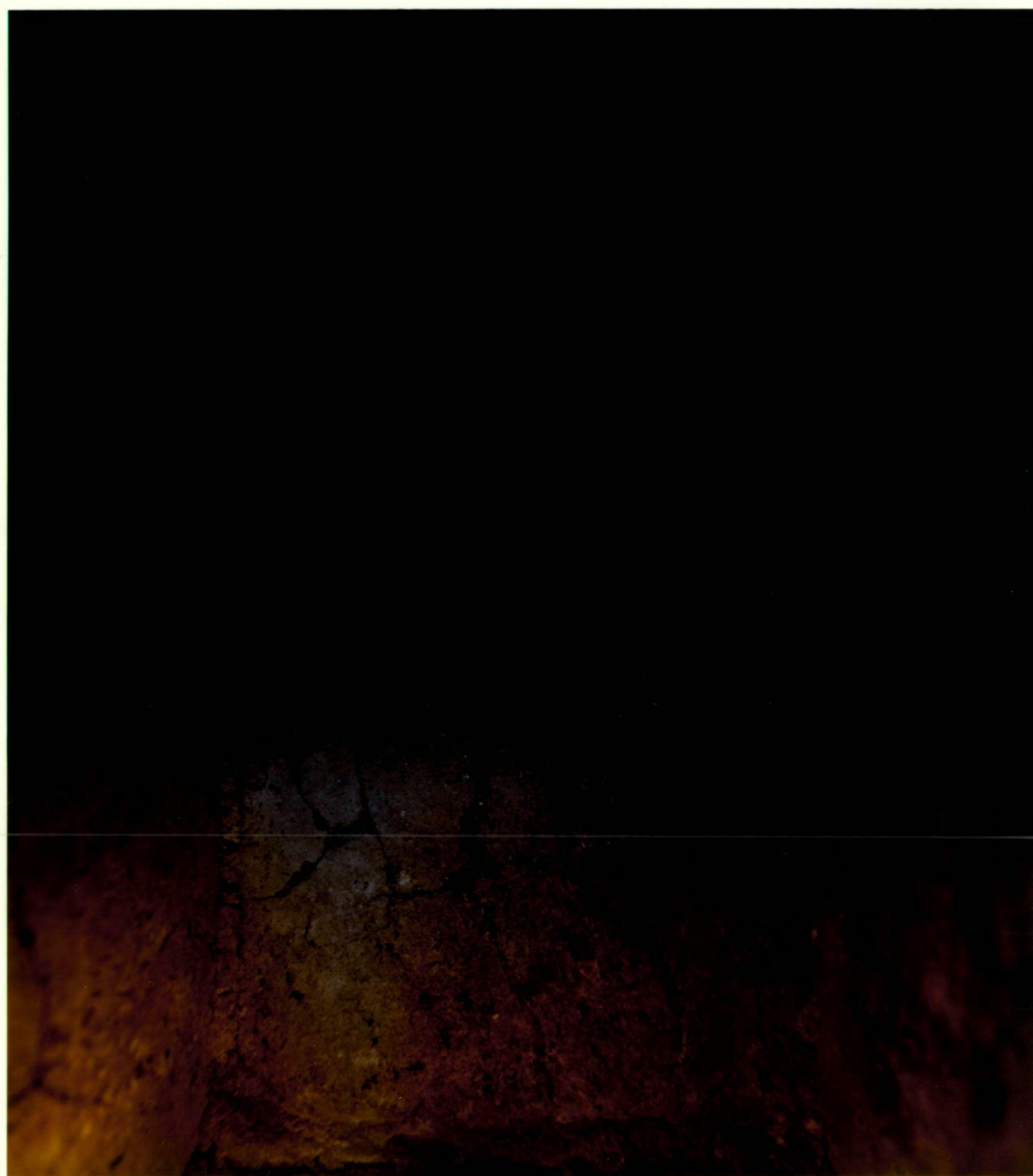
There is no moment when the body of the animal is at rest; it never dies; but because it no longer exists for us, we believe that it no longer exists at all. Bodies are transmuted...metamorphosed, but they are never inert. Inertia is absolutely impossible for matter whether matter is organized or not. Weigh these truths carefully and you will see where they lead and what a twist they give to human morality.

Sade



I saw a human being swimming in the sea, with the large webbed feet of a duck instead of arms and legs and a dorsal fin proportionately as long and streamlined as a dolphin's, strong of muscle, and followed by numerous shoals of fish...let it be known that man, by his multiple and complex nature, is not unaware of the means of extending its frontiers...

Comte de Lautreamont



Notes on Work

Life, death and decay in the physical, psychological and spiritual domains are my concerns. I do not regard them as separate from one another. Rather, life, death and decay are interconnected. My concerns also include, through my photographs, the rediscovery of the inner harmony we felt as young children before the opposites split, dividing us from ourselves and one another. My aim has been to produce photographic images which evoke a sense of continuity between the individual, the collective, and the underlying primordial unity and sense of oneness with all that 'is' - both present and absent.

I bring three important areas of my own personal experience to the work, however the impetus for the practice is the connection to a universal experience. I hope to be able to direct the viewers mind to something beyond the work of art, to a meaning that has universal significance. My aim is to bring awareness of an inner journey, of a reality that is Other. It is the Other which shapes life, like air in a balloon, its liveness comes from lifelessness, its form derived from an absence of its own being.

The diachronic field of experience that nourishes my work is that of being an identical twin (the mirror and the mirrored), and the love and suffering of life and death of my mother - sameness and otherness, presence and absence, discontinuity and continuity. To these concerns I join an interest in mysticism and practice of eastern forms of yoga/meditation.

These areas have in common, the exploration of their limits, the transgression of, and ultimate transcendence of these same limits.

The limits of identity - the 'I' and the non 'I', the limits of life, death - discontinuity and continuity; transcendence, where the limited becomes limitlessness.....A space where the duality of subject and object are no longer known.....The process of becoming is the progressive limitation of the unlimited. Consequently liberation consists in the reversal of this process, namely, in the progressive annihilation of limitations.

Mythologically the first phase in the ego's development appears as the cosmic egg. In the Hindu tradition it is the Golden Egg of Brahma, floating on the waters of chaos: the first tentative separation, while still floating amid that which it contains and composes. This is the dawning of self-consciousness. By eating from the tree of Knowledge we saw ourselves objectively - from outside. This was the first sign of our development, the turning round in order to observe ourselves, and the consequent delineation of an identity and 'whole' within the unformed ebb and flow of 'unqualified bliss'. This state is described in many of the creation myths, which are at once microcosmic and macrocosmic. Myths and art are a bridge between the conscious and unconscious states of people, by

providing a passageway back and forth between the irrational and the rational, the emotional and the intellectual, the clear consciousness of mind and the dark subconscious.

I wish my pictures to evoke absence as presence, to create a reverence for what is unseen as well as seen, for that 'which has been' to become a co-presence by creating an 'inwardness of mind'. I aim to lead the viewer into a reflexive psychological response by attempting to transform the relations of the Imaginary and the Symbolic (absence and presence).

'This has been' is photography's evidential power, the past becomes a co-presence.....death - (absence), enters into life, to become the presence of absence.

My photographic work has been enhanced by the theoretical research I have undertaken during the course. I say theory has enhanced my knowledge, not my 'knowing', as I feel one of the gravest indictments of intellectualism is the strange determination to deny people the validity and dignity of their own experience, by subjecting it to some external preconceptualised devaluation, (eg. Freud's 'Oedipus Triangle').

Thus my experience, research and practical experimentation are synchronised, and in this coalescence inner states and outer events relating to them are worked together in a relatively intuitive manner. Just as semiotics and psychoanalysis are methods of enquiry...so is art. My visual images are the result of my exploration.

The point of departure for my photographic work was my experience of being an identical twin, with its attendant blurring of identity.....She is the same as me..... who is the other.....is she other?.....If the other is the same.....what does that mean?.....If there is no difference, only sameness, are there no limits?....Can there be limits while still being aware of limitlessness?.....If delineation (development of identity) is not created from outside, then can it be created from the inside?.....If created from the inside.....can not a sense of limitlessness remain?.....My sister was born first. Am I a part of her,? or is she a part of me.....we a whole.....In the cycle of life was she born to live life and was I born to die.....or do we meet at the point of fusion from life to death.....from death to life or transition.....do we live this fusion.....of sameness and otherness?

In Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) he says of the young ego: 'The ego detaches itself from the external world. Or, to put it more correctly, originally the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself. Our present ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive - indeed all-

embracing - feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it. If we may assume that there are many people in whose mental life this primary ego-feeling has persisted to a greater or less degree, it would exist in them side by side with the narrower and more sharply demarcated ego-feeling of maturity, like a kind of counterpart to it. In that case, the ideational contents appropriate to it would be precisely those of limitlessness and of a bond with the universe - the same ideas with which my friend [Romain Rolland] elucidated the 'oceanic' feeling' (p.68).

I was drawn to the work of Julia Kristeva and her investigations into the construction of identity. Her work strives to undermine identity in favour of a subject always in process, on trial, or what she calls 'a process without a subject'. Her investigations are into the pre-oedipal stage, which she names the semiotic disposition. This is the 'revival of archaic pre-oedipal modes of operation'. The semiotic is conceptualized as the preverbal moment when the child is bound up with, and dependant on, the mothers body. This is chronologically anterior to the (mirror stage) imposition of the symbolic (or paternal) order. In order to acquire language, the semiotic relation to the maternal body must undergo repression. Kristeva says that this phenomenon pervades the entire structure of the Symbolic order and only the reactivation, the irruption of the semiotic/maternal can disrupt and remodel the Symbolic to produce the heterogeneous (unconscious), which is the mark of the poetic. The dominant (paternal) notion of the subject (the mother), which sustains the Symbolic order, is contrasted with an-other, un-symbolic conception, since 'then every speaker would be led to a nothingness asymmetrically opposed to this Being, a permanent threat against first, its mastery, and ultimately its stability'. Kristeva's notion of maternal difference centres exclusively on the Symbolic and the Imaginary.

(Unlike the symbolic, the imaginary is inhabited by an infinite number of selves preceding socialization, before the ego is produced within a social frame. These selves allow an infinite, unnameable potential to emerge, one which a fixed sense of character excludes in advance). For Kristeva, poetic language, art in general is the 'semiotization of the Symbolic'.

Through this research I was lead to the work of Jacques Lacan and his reinterpretations of Freudian theory. These allow for heterogeneity, which, known as the unconscious, shapes the signifying function. My particular interest was the mirror stage. It is the first stage of primary narcissism. This leads the subject in process, entry into the symbolic order. Lacan uses the terms Imaginary and Symbolic to describe realms of sameness (a kind of total internality) and difference (signification) and it is the axis of the Imaginary and the Symbolic that is the mirror phase.

In the Imaginary the child is still bound up with an image of himself in a unified position; the child and his image in a mirror, subject and object are not differentiated.

The Symbolic is a construct of differences in that the sign is no longer collapsed with its referent; the child is split from his image - the subject is haunted by ghosts as the fictional totality of the Ideal Ego is broken.

Lacan says that once the boundary between the Imaginary and the Symbolic has been crossed, it is impossible to return. He calls this the Ego Ideal, which implies the restoration of a previous unity but with the paradoxical aim of keeping the new, social identity and that former unity. The desire to become reunited with their mirror image once the subject has entered the realm of language, the Symbolic, is a desire that is said can never be fulfilled since the image is now a symbolic representation and as such, irreconcilable with its referent (this I dispute). So the 'Ego Ideal', the idea of the unified ego after socialisation, is a sigh, and echo, of the actual Ideal Ego which existed in the pre-linguistic Imaginary.

In the mirror phase the image 'I' in the mirror signifies the 'I', the person looking in the mirror; but yet he is always absent from the mirror, whose signification is a pointing outwards, away from itself, to the referent. My aim has been to return the viewer to an inward journey to a point of internality, where subject and object are not differentiated.

The third order with which Lacan deals, is the Real - corresponding not only to the external reality but also to what might be called the 'mystery' of reality.

What I found compelling about Lacan's ideas was the affiliation with Jung's theories on the archetypal theory (collective unconscious), and personal unconscious, which may be aligned with Lacan's Symbolic and Imaginary respectively. Lacan says the Real is an 'incommensurable dimension' which 'no one has been able to attain since humanity began to express itself'. He says we do not know the Real because it is pre-verbal, pre-representational, and suffers from 'primal repression'.

Jung revealed that in the collective unconscious of individuals were infinite resources of energy organised in definite recognisable patterns. Each of these patterns had at its disposal its own form of energy located, as it were, at the centre, between the unconscious and the conscious. He talks of a master pattern to which all other patterns subscribed, and all the energies could be joined in one transcendental orbit. He called these patterns initially, primordial images; later he named them 'archetypes'. In psychological terms, that from which we part with such reluctance is the undifferentiated matrix of the unconscious, an

existence bathed in the pre-egoid memories of the watery abyss of our life within the womb.

.....he who knows the origin of things, knows their dissolution...

The Symbolic and the Imaginary are considered by Lacan to be our means of coping with the pain of separation (or rupture, as he calls it) - the rupture of birth, of weaning, of growing up.

I also explored the work of George Bataille, on eroticism, death, and sacrifice (see theoretical papers and concluding essay). At the point of fusion in eroticism, death and sacrifice is silence. What appealed to me also, was his use of language, in that he pushed it to its limits in trying to make it (language) express the inexpressible. Bataille was not interested in communicating a specific knowledge or system. 'Moreover, his experience was such that it could not take an intellectual form, because it was an awareness of that primordial unity which thought must inevitably destroy, because thought implies division'. (Gaeton Picon)

My fascination in these theoretical areas is concerned particularly with the space where subject and object are not differentiated; whether it be Kristeva's semiotic - (the preverbal moment when the child is bound up with the mothers body) or Lacan's mirror stage, (where the child is bound up with an image of itself in a unified position). In Bataille's writings and personal experience, he sought extreme states, moments of ecstasy and moments of excess, which allow us to break off our discontinuity, and confer a sense of continuity. Whether this be the form of erotic or religious experience, or laughter; the conscious refusal to limit ourselves allows us to grasp the unity of the domain of eroticism. Eroticism leads the way to death which opens the way for the transgression of our limits. Eroticism leads to the blending and fusion of separate objects Death leads the way to continuity.

So my pictures pivot on the basis of that which cannot be seen (said) as well as that which attracts the viewer towards the edges of their own limits. Both are sensed as vitally present. My aim has been to make fluid the distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic so that the viewer can internalise the direction of his/her own vision and thought, while shuttering the view of the world outside.....

becoming and dissolving, between finite and infinite.....

I produced a series of images that set up a theme, rather than a narrative; (there are gaps or spaces in between.....therefore my images are always intended to be ambiguous). It is through this ambiguity that the viewer's imagination can be aroused. The ability to project what is not there springs forth, just as a reading is also a writing of the story. It is also this ambiguity that may allow the work to have more universal relevance. My purpose in my pichotographs (as in my papers) is to to disrupt the Symbolic in order to raise questions.

It had been suggested that I use objects in my images but I felt by doing so, the objects would only place the reading into a closed system. However, by leaving things out - absence, creating doubt in the viewer as to the way to close the gap; I demand the viewer to introduce elements from their own experience, creating an open system. It is my belief that it is the spaces 'inbetween', or the ill-defined areas that hold the *Fullness of Being* and therefore lead to an erotic plenitude....

The mirror like surface of my photographs and the rendering of wet reflective surfaces evoke the mirror like surface of the water which Narcissus gazed into. They are an invitation into the Imaginary, 'where what we see siezes our vision and makes it interminable'. In the Imaginary, in the state of illumined dissolution, we lose the distinction between mind and body, subject and object, and realise that every object is related to every other object, not only spatially but also temporally.

In my first body of work (Series I 'Untitled' 1988) I manipulated the initial photographic prints (shot on 120 VPL). and then rephotographed them on 5 x 4 VPL film. The first series were of my friends and family. These people included adults, adolescents and children, both male and female. Diachronically, these people represent for me, the stages that create the processes of life and death, the movement of love - Eros and Thanatos - a continuum.....The effect of the figures was achieved by putting the original resource print (type C), behind a piece of glass that had an undulating surface, like the ripples on the surface of water, (similar to the pond of Narcissus). The glass was painted with a deep reddish/purple watercolour (for its transparency). The colour was chosen for its symbolic connotations, being a cardinal colour and the colour of blood. The undulating surface of the glass 'melted' the figures, creating a movement of fluidity within the images. This brought to mind ambiguity: dissolution or agglutination of limits.Movement and life are synonymous, so that anything that prevents or obstructs it, by imposing rest and immobility, is the death principle....Thanatos. The images were taken in an old fruit cool - store, a place of suspended animation, suspended decay. The chamber is spacious, yet silent. The intersection of space and time evoked a feeling of timelessness. It is through space and over time that things step into visible appearance, whether physical, psychological, or spiritual. Time is the means of making actual what is potential.

Light has been used symbolically throughout the three bodies of work. Light and dark symbolize the conscious and the unconscious and their perpetual interaction. Light has been used to articulate the shadow of what is known - shadow is the 'thing unknown'. The images in the first body of work are predominantly dark - shadow pictures of reality. There is an unworldly light that cause the figures to hover between appearance and disappearance, becoming and dissolving, finite and infinite, the unconscious and the conscious....The subconscious becomes the receptacle of acts which the conscious self of a person will not commit. They are committed then to their fantasy life - revealing the force of good and evil, of love and hate, that inhabits us simultaneously.....but we can live these fantasies as an inner event.

The stains on the images signify blood. The blood of history, the blood of birth, the blood that nourishes the body. It also signifies emotion and spirit. Blood is the vehicle of the *elan vital*, present in birth and violent death. In eastern symbolism, it is space presenting itself as matter.

The models were dressed in white clothing, suggesting purity and a sense of the sacred.....Sacredness is, in a sense, a feeling, - but a feeling that goes to the very depths of life. It is the feeling of reverence....and it is the totality of life that is revered....life and death.

Metaphorically, the first series of images, alternating with the second series exchange values of good and evil, life and death , abjection and narcissism, pain and pleasure, beauty and terror, male and female. But these dialectics are not opposing terms. Each state bears the 'trace' of the other. It is this 'trace' that is 'the space inbetween'.

This is the foundation of the first body of work, but it is only for the convenience of explaining the methodology and content of the work as a whole, that I separate them from the following two series. As one body shifts into the other, it becomes an aggregation - the point of interchange where the knowledge of one world becomes the foundation of the world above.

The technique for the second series (Series II 'Untitled' 1988) was similar to the first, in that the same resource material was used, but with particular attention to images that contained adolescents - shadows of the adultworld, both male and female. Access to the Symbolic is afforded by the recognition of sexual difference. It is this which creates the social 'I'. The anguish of the adolescent trying to discover their past, their relationships with adults and one another; their efforts to recover from a sense of alienation, are recurrent

moments of crisis and decision. They are growth junctures; points of initiation which mark a release or death from one state of being and a growth or birth into the next. The dawning of consciousness is a self consciousness and the subsequent delineation of a sexual identity - male or female.

Rather than an undulating glass surface, for this series of images I used plate glass. The premise for this was that I wanted the images to have greater clarity as a metaphor for consciousness and awareness of an 'inner space'.

Light was used symbolically to represent an inner light...a psychic space. The light emanates from the centre of the image to depict the centre of the self. This was enhanced by the white clothing the models were dressed in, simultaneously evoking a 'religious feeling', a sense of wholeness.....It is the inner space that is 'religious', that creates a continuity with all that has been, as opposed to discontinuity - separateness. To the ego, the experience of the world that is Other, is no different from a religious experience. The religious urge, the aspiration, means a seeking after the totality of one's life, the totality of self, that which lives outside the ego's world in the unconscious in the unseen darkness of the psyche.

It is also through love - Eros - that continuity is found. The transgression of limits, the transcending of the ego, is a religious experience. Religious experience is an inner experience. Is not what we seek in love, in the intensity of passion and suffering united (similar to mystic fervour), a symbolic death from this world and a rebirth into the divine? They both lead toward the same ends: transcendence. They both involve an infusion of the other and the self. The self is annihilated by the presence of an all powerful totality, it is dissipated and dissolved in otherness.....absence.....The extremes of Eros impose like death, violence and dissolution. To suffer consciously means to live through the death of the ego and instead to find one's own inner life as a psychological and religious act. From primordial times death has been conceived as a 'going free' from the limited physical realm of time and space into the unlimited and measureless universe of spirit.

In the images, the fusion of bodies overlapping and merging, is the cipher denoting destruction of individual autonomy that leads to the transgression of individual identity or death, and through death to continuity. The 'Land of Death' is the inner world of the soul. The deepest meaning of death, experienced in the deepest regions of the unconscious, is a symbol of transformation.

The eyes turn inwards, metaphorically there is an oscillation between fragmentation and control, inner and outer, absence and presence, discontinuity and continuity. The images are not necessarily of the visible world, but rather of psychological conditions.

My mother's life has had a great affect on the concerns of my work. She suffered physically - decay of the body, and suffered mentally - invasion from the outside.....I can't talk more about this as I feel this would be an invasion of her privacy. What was of profound affect were her last breaths of life.....resuscitating her, I gave my mother her last breath of life,.....but I have always questioned whether it was rather that she had given me her last breath of life.....Did her death give me life?.....my life bring her death?....Life becomes a process of exchange, inhalation and exhalation, and if this morphic movement ceases, so does life.....Death in life, life through death. At what point does non-life become life?....Does life and death exist as distinct opposites?....Do we meet at the point of fusion from life to death?....Is the point of fusion continuity? These are the questions I attempt to address in my practice, as a result of the experience of my mother's death.

This experience has been contrasted by my attendance at the birth of my twin sisters' two children.....but is 'contrasted' the right word?.....Is not birth the interface between life and the Other.....life opening onto its dissemination, either as division in a new being or annihilation in death. The child once part of the mother, at birth becomes an-*other*.....The openings of the body are sites of transformation, here one thing becomes an-*other*.....death becomes life, life becomes death.....

We carry our bodies as a fortress against the void, as a tentative assertion of our difference and sufficiency. A physical being constitutive of the self. But the Other is omnipresent.....both inside and outside.....we are the spaces inbetween, the [], that exists between the Other and itself.....

However, no matter is inert, all things change in time. No-thing is more mutable and less stable than ourselves - the only constant is change.....yet nothing ever disappears..... Life and death are part of a continuum.

Therefore life and death are not distinct opposites, but only variable formations of the other, they are really one and the same energy.....or reality. For what no longer changes, or (since our language uses concepts of movement; from one to another state - [only silence allows *the space inbetween* to yield forth]) 'turns' into something other - decay. Physical identity therefore, is a location, not an essence - our essence is really the *other*....

The third body of work (Series III 'Untitled' 1989-1990) transcends what has gone before.....from limitlessness to limited and a return again to limitlessness.....the eternal in the temporal and back to the eternal.....Matter dispersed into spirit.....Whether transcendence is seen as boundless space, infinite power, infinite being or eternal life depends on our individuality. To others it may be omnipotent consciousness, unlimited knowledge, or all embracing love.

We are pulled in both directions, since our longing for the womb, (described by some psychologists), has its counter part in the passionate longing of the mystic for the union with God.

If the beginning of our journey in life was the Golden Egg, its end then is the rediscovery of that which was lost, the Golden Fleece or Alchemical Gold,

*Going on means going far
Going far means returning
Tao Te Ching*

So to go backwards would be to go against the order of things. There can be a return to the centre (unity) only if there was a departure from it, just as there can be no contraction without expansion. As one leads to another, so the initial expansion and exploration of the developing individual is checked by its return from unlimited dissipation into the infinite. Thus delineated, the ego ('I') is contrasted with that which is outside, and returns to dissolve its own delineation, to find a 'within that is immanent'.

The figurative images are minimal - a male and a female are represented. I contrasted these with abstract images that evoke the elements - earth, fire, water, air; elements for transformation,

.....where neither earth or water, neither fire nor air can find a foothold.....

In Mystic alchemy these elements are the base materials for transmutation, i.e. substances exposed to the pure incorruptible gold of the prima materia, the original substance, the ultimate principle of the world. Therefore, the one who succeeds in penetrating to the purity of the undifferentiated primordial form (prima materia), has gained access to the secret of all creative power, which is based on the mutability of all elements and phenomena.....where the 'I' and the non-'I' duality has been transcended.

The figurative images were photographed through mottled stained glass windows. They were shot at night and lit from the inside (the models were outside) to produce the effect of water. They were originally made on 120 VPL film, then only details of the negative were enlarged. These were rephotographed on 5 x 4 Kodak HC film which produced the 'graininess' of the figurative images, in order to represent matter dispersing into spirit.

The abstract images were photographed in such a way as to suggest deep space, but at the same time can be seen as a container.....symbolic of fertility.and re -generative power. In the abstract images, the two lines of perspective converge to an imaginary point beyond the picture plane. This point being non manifest is total possibility, and contains - just as unity contains multiplicity - an infinite potentiality of manifestation, duration and extension. Since this potential extension is in all directions, the point is central - *the Centre in the midst of conditions* - which is also the realization of the source in one's own being.....

*For what the centre brings
Must obviously be
That which remains to the end
And was there from eternity.*

Goethe

The descent, however, can only be manifest when each person has realized, *if only for a moment*, the change of consciousness at the centre in the midst of conditions. From childhood onwards, we learn to obscure desires and rechannel instincts. The tree of knowledge bears unutterably sweet fruit which in our age of so called reason, are either out of reach or overripe. Knowledge of oblivion, like good and evil, pain and pleasure, are always known through a dialectic of negation, and never savoured in isolation. However, art can confer form and redeem what in itself is only non-being, negation and contradiction.....where the possible is created along with the actual. In the photograph the latent image, when made visible becomes the recollection of consciousness in light, which is both an inward and outward transition of mind and spirit. It is the actualization of something incommunicable and unpresentable....Without reasoning, without thinking, our feelings pull us toward the other side of ourselves, where the image vibrates with the promise of an extraordinary experience. The spirit world is made immediate and palpable through symbolic experience. It is the resurrection in art of what has been forgotten.

The Installation (see slides)

I have produced each body of work to stand on its own, however my intention has always been to show the work as a whole. By doing so, the cycles of birth, death, decay become a spiral, i.e. the cycles are building upon themselves. The eternal yielding and resisting of desire struggles with the journey of consciousness - growth; the evolution of consciousness.

The intention of showing the work as a whole was to create a rhythm that becomes an emotional apprehension of the unnameable. The images depict action and movement through time - a temporal sequence moving into a timeless pose. Consequently the immobile image is not momentary, but outside the dimension of time.

The images are intended to be read as a progression, a genesis of movement and growth. Therefore I sought a suitable place to achieve the impression of the totality of affect.....an affect of intense silence and timelessness.

I discovered an old, disused, jam factory made of sandstone. The stone designates what has been extracted from the earth. The appeal of the interior of the building was its evocation of timelessness. The decaying walls of the building symbolized, for me, the decay of the life of the body or psychological life. The building, like the cool-room in the photographs, was very spacious and yet contained by its own silence. Symbolically, the images returned to where they had originally emanated from.

Man, this creation so noble in faculty; moves step by step in a pilgrimage that is destined to bring him only back again to the inanimate state of stone. From dust we are, and to dust we ultimately return. When satisfaction triumphs, then Eros is eliminated and Thanatos has a free hand for accomplishing its purposes.

Sigmund Freud

The first body of work was shown on the wall housing the entrance to the room in order to suggest the notion of entry/manifestation. I decided to remove the white borders from these images so that the figure would appear to be either emanating from or receding into the stone.

The second body of work was hung on the opposite wall. The borders of the images were left on as this implied a certain sense of containment. This also helped to bring the images out from the wall.....in order to suggest the notion of extension.

The third body of work was displayed in the centre of the room, representing the 'space inbetween'. These images were pinned to sheets of painted craft board 8' x4', hung by chain and hooks from the beams that formed a mezzanine floor in the centre of the room. The boards were placed in such a way that the viewer had to walk into the centre of the constructed space. Thus an 'inner space' was created. Images were hung on both sides of the boards, so the viewer had to look from the inside as well as the outside. From this space the viewer could see the other two bodies of work on the walls.....From the centre, the viewer saw the outer while looking at the inner....from the outer, the viewer could see the inner - awareness of inner and outer *at the same time*.

Light was used symbolically. Party festoons were placed around the room as limited electricity was available. By using the festoons, I was able to light each print, as well as creating the soft ambience of light that I wanted. For the first body of work each image was individually lit - creating nuances of light and shade which helped to give the illusion of dissolution and agglutination.

In the second body of work the images were hung closer together, so the lighting covered more than one image at a time. Metaphorically this represented a greater degree of consciousness.....a greater sense of continuity.

With the third body of work I wanted to create the ambience of the Alchemical Gold.....the elixir of life.....transcendence.....the becoming one in the spirit, where all self-limitation, all duality of 'self' and 'non-self' is extinguished. The ambience of heat (psychic heat) was achieved by using yellow household globes. Heat was to radiate from the roof to the floor. The lights were placed in strategic positions to ensure that shadows did not fall within the centre.

The central light and the lit walls left an area of darkness created between the two. The darkness implies the existence of things that are beyond the reach of our senses and yet exercise their power on us - where absence becomes presence.

As I wanted to maintain the integrity of the building itself, I decided to use only those elements available within the building. This meant using old jam tins to direct the light onto the images. These were long (approx 15ins) and square. The inside of the tins were gold in colour complementing the ambience of heat and light. In one end was a hole for the globe, the other end was cut and bent back, so as to do the work of 'barn doors'. These were wired to the beams around each globe. The 'inner space' lighting was left nude - allowing

light to emanate from the centre. This complemented the warmth of the images. Nails that had been soaked in nitric acid were used to hang the images from the sandstone walls.

By attempting to transform the relations between the Symbolic and the Imaginary through my images, I have tried to create an imaginary space - 'the space inbetween'. The underlying premise is the moment when the rigid necessity of the law is transgressed, or rather, transformed and dissolved into the supreme freedom of the imaginary (harmony). This experience does not mean absolute unity or sameness. Harmony does not annihilate diversity. What it does mean is that individual and universal law complement each other. In the visible discourse of my photographs, I have attempted to evoke the invisible in the visible - in the picture the undepicted, by making present what is absent. I have also alluded to another latent discourse, in which the themes of Eros and Thanatos reside.

By presenting the work as an installation I have tried to create a 'contemplative space', where silent contemplation becomes the substitute for language. I have attempted to evoke a psychic space where there is an absence of separating distinctions, whereby a sense of continuity is felt, in which 'eroticism is correctly directed toward the inside of the soul and the internal light that constitutes it'. 'In this silence consciousness and continuity can draw very close together - this moment indeed, is a silent one'. Contemplation becomes an active spectacle when exploring our own psychic space.....

In that hushed silence of that moment, the moment of death.....

.....that space within, separated from life, as well as death, where there is no separation of objects, no chronology, but a timelessness where eternity lies here inside, no division whatsoever, simply a series of circular motivations.....

Plotinus would have Narcissus say; 'Dispossessed: I took possession'.

Theoretical Submission
Master of Fine Art

Seminar I Paper

The Word and the Daemon

*Where slowly from the long-forgotten,
Past experience rises up in us,
Perfectly mastered, mild and beyond measure,
And realized in the intangible:
There begins the word, as we conceive it,
And its meaning quietly surpasses us -
For the mind that makes us lonely, wants
To be sure that we shall be united.*

Rainer Maria Rilke

Introductory Note

The sadness of young children just prior to their acquisition of language has often been observed; this is when they have to renounce forever the maternal paradise in which every demand is immediately gratified. The child must abandon its mother and be abandoned by her in order to be accepted by the father and begin talking. If it is true that language begins in mourning inherent in the evolution of subjectivity, the abandonment of the father - the symbolic "other" - triggers a melancholy anguish that can grow to suicidal proportions. "I detest him, I am he, therefore I must die". Beyond the torment of suicide there is joy, ineffable happiness at finally rejoining the abandoned object.¹

Kristeva's quote alludes to the alienation that is caused by the acquisition of language, in that our utilitarian use of language separates us from our immediate experience of the primordial unity and sense of oneness with all that 'is' - both present and absent. In this essay I have tried to allude to the 'maternal paradise' which is 'that desired state where everything is the same': the pre-oedipal bliss of the fusion of bodies in which infant and mother are 'inextricably mixed' (continuity), that absence of the pain of differing, condition of identity and meaning (discontinuity), whose extinction is deferred until death.

I have chosen to make these allusions to this state by presenting a series of oblique approaches to my subject, which inevitably flounders somewhere between suggestion and statement, rather than the blinding glare of argument. We have renounced this experience of continuity in order to enter into the Symbolic order which can be described as 'that social order constructed by discrete units of meaning, by a network of signifiers'. In opposition to the Symbolic is the Imaginary 'which is without (before) signifiers'. What I postulate is that we can transgress the limits of our individuality and have access to a pre-linguistic experience of the world, which will heal the violence that our utilitarian use of language perpetuates.

Paradoxically, as it is language that I insult, it is language that I must use to convey my ideas; so I have tried to make fluid the distinction between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. I have done this in two ways. Firstly by the subject matter discussed, in which in all areas of practice there is a space where the subject/object distinction disappears, the limits of the individual ego are broken and there comes an experience of the 'other' - this is the 'space' where language is lost. Secondly, the style I have chosen for the essay upsets the accepted 'narrative' role of reading. The subject reading becomes an active participant in the

disappearance of meaning, of sense.....non-sense, which is none the less all the sense at the moment when sense is lost.....

.....presence is replaced by absence

.....one enters the abyss where language can say no... more

silence is heard

Ultimately the reader 'reduced to silence', reduces to silence the words (which negate their own linguistic, rational consciousness) by superimposing their own silent, interpretative negation.....

** * **

Humanity has become estranged from its authentic possibilities. This vision prevents us from taking any unequivocal view of the sanity of common sense, or of the madness of the so called madmen. At all events, we are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world - mad, even, from an ideal stand-point we can glimpse but not adopt. We are born into a world where alienation awaits us. We are potentially people, but are in an alienated state, and this state is simply not a natural system. Lacerated, alienated existence as our present destiny is achieved only by outrageous violence perpetrated by human beings on human beings. However, what is required is more than a passionate outcry of outraged humanity.....

Laing says "If the human race survives, future men will, I suspect, look back on our enlightened epoch as a veritable age of Darkness. They will presumably be able to savour the irony of this situation with more amusement than we can extract from it. The laugh's on us. They will see that what we call 'schizophrenia' was one of the forms in which, often through quite ordinary people, the light began to break through the cracks in our all-too-closed minds...Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be breakthrough...The person going through ego-loss or transcendental experiences may or may not become in different ways confused. Then he might legitimately be regarded as mad. But to be mad is not necessarily to be ill, not with standing that in our culture the two categories have become confused...From the alienated starting point of our psuedo-sanity, everything is equivocal. Our sanity is not 'true' sanity. Their madness is not 'true' madness. The madness of our patients is an artifact of the destruction wreaked on them by us and by them on themselves. Let no one suppose that we meet 'true' madness any more than we are truly sane. The madness that we encounter in 'patients' is a gross travesty, a mockery, a grotesque caricature of what the natural healing of that estranged integration we call sanity might be. True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego."² - a nocturnal dissolution.

On the psychological plane on the one hand, *you* and *I* can take pleasure, pride, in being a unique being, different from all other being, alone, and rejoicing in ones isolation; to be a discontinuous being; on the other hand, there is the desire usually submerged in the unconscious to transgress the limits of individuality, to return to continuity and merge into the 'whole that transcends'. To identify with the entirety of the whole, one must forgo one's desire for autonomy - like a bolt of lightning opening up the night sky, the abolition of the limits of individuality takes place - provisionally, one enters into the 'transcendent whole', losing a good measure of one's sense of discontinuity. The 'transcendent whole' is a reality that goes beyond (humanly definable) nature insofar as it is undefined, not insofar as it has supernatural determination. Not a state but *moments* (of infinite laughter

or ecstasy). In the space of this fleeting moment, individual existences are rendered interpenetrable.

There seem to be two motives for this desire to transcend the limits of individuality. First the distance from this site of me to the site of you becomes unbearable for, as Aristotle pointed out, 'man is a social animal'. Thus there comes a moment in the lives of most, where one's avidity to be discontinuous tires, exhausts itself, and one yearns for a higher power to take over the dominion of one's life. Furthermore, one longs for a more intimate union with ones surroundings - one has an overwhelming desire to belong. We can neither escape the feeling of insufficiency which leads us to desire identification with the entirety of 'being', nor can we renounce our ambition to realize this desire. The varieties of both instincts can be found in mystical experience.

Carl Jung and his school define the natural mystical experience as a reversion to a primitive state of affairs in which consciousness had not yet separated itself from the unconscious. Mystical experience is a re-entry into the aeonic region of the human psyche, the undifferentiated unconscious. Just as Greek myth acknowledged the existence of a state where the dieties are united in an all encompassing Fullness - called the 'Pantheon' - so in Jung's psychology the place of the Divine existences is taken by the archetypes, which are none other than the psychological emanations of the impersonal and unknown Fullness.

This unknown Fullness is for Jung, the sum of the archetypes which signifies the sum of all latent potentialities of the human psyche. This is an enormous and overwhelming store of knowledge and power which concerns not at all personalistic psychic questions, but the most powerful relations between God, man and the cosmos. This psychic knowledge is for all intents and purposes shut up in a cell, locked away in the space of night. But if the key is found and the door left ajar, opened to the light of day - we awaken it to new life by integrating it with consciousness. There, the archetypal gods await the neophyte ego to be initiated into the mystery of the unconscious. The initial stage of integration involves the will of the conscious ego to survive (symbolized in myths as the fight with the dragon) and beyond this comes an actual integration of consciousness; a wholeness of the unified personality whereby we remove ourselves from our state of dread and alienation, and become once again incorporated in the eternal process of the *Fullness of Being*. In its psychological sense the *Fullness of Being* is described as neither more nor less than the original fullness, or totality of psychic reality, from whence the differentiated ego with its multiplicity of functions and powers emanates and whither - as a result of the process of individuation.....but it strives to return.

Jung proposes a principle inherent in the human being which impels us toward individuation - *Principium Individuationis* - a striving for our true nature which leads

humanity to its authentic goal. The motivation behind this principle comes from what the psychoanalytic movement has called *libido* - being the essence of desire. The psyche is drawn forward by the aim of the *principium libidinis* while it is urged forward by the *principium individuationis*. The *Principium Individuationis* is the inherent tendency of the human psyche not to give up its light of consciousness and fall back into the internal abyss of primordial darkness. How to remain individuals, in the classical sense of an indivisibly integrated psychic being, an individuum, while at the same time possessing an optimum degree of permeability toward the ineffable immensity of the *Fullness* within us, was the objective of Jung.

* * *

In the Western world we have lost contact with the suprasensory world. In Jung's opinion it has been religion, as practiced in the West, that began the great heresy of separation, the philosophy of the excluded middle - the *either / or* which claims to mark decisive choices between immutable terms. The unholy alliance of Semitic moralizing and Aristotelian logic which invaded and conquered Christendom by way of the works of Thomas Aquinas immersed western humanity in the method of the absolute categorisation of all things into an attitude to be characterized as *either this or that*. Light and dark are envisioned as being in conflict because our thinking has come to accept the notion that both cannot exist simultaneously - when day is becoming night. If one was to take a Jungian psycho-historical view, one can recognize that the early, demiurgic phase of religiosity in the West was directed toward differentiation, the wrenching of consciousness from its aeonial slumber in the unconscious; resulting in the manifestation of division: where the imperative exercise of a dominion is directed toward individuation, [the reintegration of differentiated and alienated consciousness with the unconscious - a unity, always becoming.³].

The primacy of the word, of that which can be spoken and communicated in discourse, is characteristic of the Greek and Judaic genius and carried over into Christianity. The classic and the Christian senses of the world strive to order reality within the governance of language. Literature, philosophy, theology, law, the arts of history, are endeavours to enclose within the bounds of rational discourse the sum of human experience, its recorded past, its present condition and future expectations. The code of Justinian, the *Summa* of Aquinas, the world chronicles and compendia of medieval literature, the *Divina Commedia* are attempts at total containment. They bear solemn witness to the belief that all truth and realness, with the exception of a small, 'queer' (some call schizophrenic) margin at the very top, can be housed inside the walls of language. From a rational 'monological' (Bakhtin) world, otherness cannot be known or represented except as foreign, irrational, transcendental, 'mad', bad. It is either rejected altogether, or polemically refuted, or

assimilated into a 'meaningful' narrative structure, rewritten or written out as romance or fable. Foucault writes of unreason, "Any transgression in life becomes a social crime, condemned and punished....imprisoned in a moral world [for offending] bourgeois society".⁴ By translating *all* aspects of the world into the code - language of one sense only - the reading eye of the printing press has had a hand in hypnotizing and fragmenting Western consciousness - of closing the door on the 'Other'. We lie rigid in what Blake called 'Newton's sleep'.

In the West, concepts of the psyche are based on Newtonian mechanics which leads our view of the psyche to be strictly mechanical. Newtonian mechanics sees the world as a conglomeration of distinct entities, whereby, momentary phenomena are torn out of their living relationship and concretized into causative material objects - ultimately billiard ball atoms, clashing with each other in atomized or linear patterns of causal sequence 'because' struck by the cue and so on ad infinitum. However, there is no place for the idea of causality when it is understood that the separation of entities from one to another is purely conceptual like the notions of the three dimensions of space or a constellation of the stars.

Understood in this way, the world is at first figuratively and later literally 'shattered'. The causal relationship between things and events are clumsy apprehensions of the fact that they are not truly distinct from one to another. In an ideally brilliant, empty infinity, the anxious loss of life opens, but life only loses itself - at the limit of the last breath - *for this is empty infinity*. The *me* raises itself to the pure imperative, living / dying for an abyss without walls or floor (no limits); it abandons all applications to the world.

For the Hindu or Buddhist religion is primarily a matter of experience; it is not so much something to be believed as something to be lived - not a faith in, but contact with, a suprasensory world - something to be experienced rather than professed and such experience in its higher forms is usually called mystical experience.

The basic 'truth' of Vedanta and Buddhism is simply experience, a transformation of consciousness. Each experience cannot be defined or limited as something that exists in itself, but only in relationship to other experiences. This fact is circumscribed in the concept '*sunyata*', the non-absoluteness, the infinite relationship of all experience.

One follows several paths which ostensibly lead to the summit - amongst them is the pursuit of knowledge or the pursuit of transcendent knowledge or madness. Alternately, the mastery of our inner movements, which in the long run, we can acquire, is well known in the East - it is meditation.

Meditation - being aware without thinking - is initially the temporary suspension of the habit of talking to oneself, of the compulsive cluttering of naked experience with words

and ideas about it; where one closes the door to stop discourse (the noise, the mechanics of the outside). In meditation, we are not 'cast into the world', since we open the world, as if we were transcending the world seen as it is, or as it was before we started dreaming. In meditation one re-discovers an interior space. This is not blank mindedness or unconsciousness, it is a silence of the mind, and we break that silence as soon as we attempt to say what it is that we realize in this state. Barely have we directed our attention towards an inner presence; when what was concealed up to then takes on a fullness, not of a storm - it is a question of slow moving states - but of an invading flood. Now sensibility is exalted at such moments; it suffices that we detach it from the neutral objects to which it is usually attached.

The idea of individual existence is conducive to setting up an object towards which ecstasy can be directed (setting up an object can conceivably aid its discovery in ecstasy). To set up an object isn't any less an obnoxious limit, because in the spark of ecstasy the necessary subject / object distinctions are necessarily consumed - they have to be annihilated. This means that as the subject is destroyed in meditation, the object also is a dying victim (otherwise the situation of ordinary life, the subject locating some useful object, would preserve the servility inherent in action, whose standard is utility).

The ebb and flow of meditation is like plant movements when a flower forms. Ecstasy isn't explanation, isn't justification, isn't clarification. What it is is a flower - as unfinished as perishable. The only way out is to take a flower, look at it till there's harmony in it, so that it explains, clarifies and justifies *because of* being unfinished - *because of* being perishable. One dies at the thought that any object to which one is attached is lost, and in this mortal fear one also feels that this object is nothing, an interchangeable sign, an empty occasion.

Yoga discipline purged itself of all desire, of all that can attach it to purely created things for detachment seems a total indifference to all actions, whether they be good or evil. The soul in such a state might be compared to that of a new born child: it has reverted to original innocence in which there is neither good or evil, subject or object.

*Having taken as a bow the great weapon of the Secret Teaching
One should fix in it the arrow sharpened by constant Meditation
Drawing it with a mind filled with That
Penetrate, O good-looking youth, that Imperishable as the Mark
The pranava (Om) is the bow; the arrow is the self;
Braham is said to be the mark.
With heedfulness is It to be penetrated;
One should become one with It as the arrow in the mark! ⁵*

In the martial arts there is a distinction between external arts (such as karate) where the emphasis is on physical mastery of movement, and internal arts (such as tai chi chuan and aikido) where the emphasis is on an 'inner' evolution and where the movement is in relation to psychic energies, processes, intensities. The difference is between on the one hand, possessing energies, and on the other becoming a conductor of energies that pass from one point to another like a current or a streaming of electricity. In tai chi one works on setting the mind and the body in movement all over, locating stases, blockages, tensions and dissolving them, cultivating a flowing attention so that the movement comes from the middle of the body and psyche, between light and dark, between outside and inside - 'between' - not a dead centre where you lock yourself up in a suffocating prison, but a vibrating point that flows between the polarities, between day and night.

*I drew near the crater as if it wasn't day, it wasn't night either, but some
unspecific time in between.⁶*

'Inner' may seem to evoke questionable divisions of the world into inside and outside.⁷ But anyone who has practiced meditation, art, or a discipline from an 'inner' orientation will know that I mean that when you meditate you can see very clearly that it is not 'you' who meditates but so many voices and figures in you. You become aware of being populated by a host of little people. We are made of images, the stuff of dreams; this innerness refers to the 'soul', the slow activation of inner movements. The movements of the soul are not in the head, separate from 'external movements', but their synchronic other side. So the innerness and the subjectivity are not 'ours' but 'theirs'; subjectivity is never ours, it is time - the soul or the spirit, the virtual. Or rather the only subjectivity is time, duration seized in its foundation, such that we are inside time, not vice-versa.

These fragments that come to us in dreams and meditation, do not form a unified 'me', master of my house, but the body's other side, the body's shadow, a body without organs. Or perhaps the organized, domesticated, armoured body is its shadow. Not any fragments will do - but fragments that are bits of living psyche, that both shine and stink -

(shining with hard won insights, stinking with the pathologies, the obsessions that push us). These fragments themselves have a double side that is both virtual and actual, both personal and impersonal, both one and many. It is a paradoxical object that is always 'between': between psyche and matter, between dream and reality, between image and concept, between philosophy and the unconscious - between day and night. These fragments give light to what has been repressed. The world may be a 'fragmented - totality - in - process', an ocean of incommensurabilities, but there are all sorts of connections between the incommensurable fragments beneath the system of the measure. A fragment refers always to other fragments, forming a multiplicity as psychic states interpenetrate in a vast game of resonance, echo, reflection, affinities, attractions and repulsions. A fragment is always in a process of change, in a series of transformations or creative repetitions with its own rhythm and speed.

The body without organs is neither strictly an imaginary body nor a literal body, neither dream body, nor waking-body, but both - a play of dark and light, of dreams and reality. The body without organs is an egg, an egg of intensities, closed in on itself, but leaking in all directions. The loneliest is the most connected, the most desertic is the most populated, the most abstract is the most 'wild and free'. A book, an image, a phrase, a dream can be a body without organs waiting to be fertilized by us and to fertilize us, to enter in a becoming with us that gives birth to something 'other' to many things. A harrowing, emotionally overwhelming experience, which brings the schizo as close as possible to matter, to a burning, living centre of matter: "...this emotion, situated outside a particular point where the mind is searching for it.....one's entire soul flows into this emotion that makes the mind aware of the terribly disturbing sound of matter, and passes through its white-hot flame".⁸

It is a continual alternation between loneliness and collaboration, between the desert and the packs that populate it is necessary.

'Bodies without organs', 'becomings' - 'intensities' - these terms seem to restore a sort of corporeal interiority - vital vibrancy, through which the faded teaching of consciousness - unconsciousness are imprinted anew. Intensities themselves are not in opposition to one another, arriving at a state of equilibrium around a neutral state. They are all positive in relationships to the zero intensity that designates the full body without organs. They undergo relative rises or falls depending on the complex relationship between them. The opposition of the forces of attraction and repulsion produces an open series of intensive elements⁹, all of them positive, that are never an expression of the final equilibrium of a system, but consist rather of an unlimited number of stationary and metastable states

through which a subject passes; an endless cycle of eternal return.....the infinitude of intensity.

* * *

Because the word has become so devalued it is difficult to give even a faint idea of the reverence with which people of more spiritual times or more religious civilizations embraced the word, which to them was the vehicle of a hallowed tradition and the embodiment of the spirit. Thus the word in the hour of its birth was a centre of force and reality and only habit and project has stereotyped it into a more conventional medium of expression, where it has become stuck in a sepulchral immobility.

But there subsists in us a silent, elusive, ungraspable part. In the region of words, of discourse, this part is neglected. Thus it usually escapes us. We can only attain it or have it at our disposal on certain terms. They are the vague inner movements, which depend on no object and have no intent - states which, similar to others linked to the purity of the sky, to the fragrance of a room, are not warranted by anything definable, so that language which, with respect to the others, has the sky, the room to which it can refer - and which directs attention towards what it grasps - is dispossessed, can say nothing, is nothing, is limited to stealing these states from attention.

Neitzsche said: "But where do those waves of everything which is great and sublime in man finally flow out? Isn't there an ocean for these torrents? - Be this ocean: there will be one....."Better than the image Dionysos philosophous, the being lost of this ocean and this bare requirement: "be that ocean", designate experience and the extreme limit to which it leads.¹⁰

We are babblers when we limit our use of language to utilitarian ends, when we make it serviceable to the projects through which we sidestep our anxiety. This abuse of language mirrors the abuse which we make of our existence: we have denatured it in removing from it the trace of the sacred in our blind observance of the dictums of project and work.

Bataille speaks often of the sand of the desert; the desert of discourse and the "chirping of ideas" - a sand into which the ostrich buries its head. Its grains are those of "...a thousand cacaphonic idiocies (almost scientific, ideology, blissful jokings, progress, touching sentimentality, belief in madness, big words and to conclude, discordance and total ignorance of the unknown)..."¹¹ There is the desert of words in which the author is enmeshed - each grain of sand is a "fold" harbouring notions which poetry and art can release. Bataille says it is through a suppression of discursive activity and through a reintroduction of the sacred that we cease to make an abuse of our existence. And it is

through sacrifice that the sacred is reintroduced. What Bataille is referring to are sensations analogous to those evoked by sacrificial rituals. The divine disorder inaugurated by the sacrifice, is a transcendent experience which unites the community through the contagion of its violence. It projects the individual beyond himself and the presence of death (via the ritualized murder) exposes him to an experience of almost limitless possibilities. It restores a continuity among people whom the profane world of work reduced to alienated individuals.

Method in meditation is analogous to technique in sacrifice. The point of ecstasy is bared if inside yourself you shatter individuality that confines you to yourself. So too sacredness replaces an animal in the exact moment the priest kills or destroys it.

An alienated individual reinforces his removal from radical continuity, the communicant becomes lost in waves of eroticism, laughter and intoxication - this is a loss which at the same time constitutes a return to *what is there*, a return to that which one evades in discursive activity and work: "Feeling of complicity in: despair, madness, love, supplication. Inhuman, dishevelled joy of *communication* - for despair, madness, love.... not a point in empty space which is not despair, madness, love and even more: laughter, dizziness, vertigo, nausea, loss of self to the point of death."¹² Knowledge becomes positive, the middle terms re-emerge as the subject re-presents to itself its absence in fusion.

For one must grasp the meaning from the inside. One must live experience.

Bataille sees the significance of erotic literature as the embodiment of the 'cursed share' which engages the protagonists and the reader on a voyage to the impossible, to the divine, Eros reintroduces the sacred into existence, reveals what is there when the subject is 'there' no longer. Bataille says that Eros is disturbing in that the tender and violent love of one person for another causes 'the most significant manifestation of the necessity for an alternation of balance and lack of balance. He describes this as the conscious movement towards disorder and confusion, the continuing putting into question of a relationship. Bataille says the violence of love brings into the striving of one heart towards another the same quality of disorder, the same thirst for losing consciousness and the same after taste of death that is found in the mutual desire for each others body'.¹³

Bataille associated eroticism with the intoxication of illumination, gliding subtly from one register to another....it is a sort of consciousness without subject. For the individual, partial loss is a means of dying while surviving. It's foolish to try and avoid the horror of loss. At the brink of what can't be born, desire names this horror as possible. Reading is eroticized when the images of loss enclosed in these tales are released into the

readers experience, inviting their loss in return. In Bataille's own novels (Blue of Noon, Story of the Eye, L'Abbe C), "it is understood at the outset that only one mechanism has been set into motion: the desire for an erotic experience which introduces disorder, divine hysteria, effusion and ultimately borders on annihilation of the conscious subject." ¹⁴

Eroticism becomes the brink of the abyss. The abyss becomes the foundation of the possible. We're brought to the edge of the same abyss by uncontrolled laughter or ecstasy. From this comes a 'questioning' of everything possible. This is the stage of rupture, of disjunction, of letting things go, of looking forward to death. It is a process *as* rupture or intrusion.

*You have to come as close as possible to death.
Without flinching. And even if necessary, flinching.*¹⁵

.....
.....
.....

In Indian Erotic art, the symbolism of sexuality also invokes a loss, a loss of individuality. To translate this symbolism into terms that are meaningful in our culture, is to say that, in an embrace of this kind (sexual intercourse), all considerations of time and place, of what and who slip away. There is no longer subject-object; into the 'yawning gap' that existed between the one and the other, there is an extraordinary melting sensation in which 'each is both', and seeing their eyes reflected in each others they realize that there is one Self looking out through both - and through all eyes everything and everywhere; there is passage, communication. The way goes through a deserted region, which is however, haunted (by ghosts of delight and fear). Beyond: are a blind man's motions, eyes wide open, arms stretching out, staring at the sun, and inside he's turning into light. Imagine now that a change takes place. There's a bursting into flame that's so sudden the ideas of substance seem empty; place, exteriority, and image become so many empty words, and the words that have least shifted - *fusion* and *light* - are by nature incomprehensible.

In fusion, the subject is absent, the object is dissolved in continuity, yet this continuity is radically outside of any continuity which a discontinuous being might envisage - it is of great consequence however, at the moment of fusion; when the stores of knowledge are absorbed into the *night* of non-knowledge the intersection of rays opens violently in a movement of catastrophe. This opening of the rays of light is the dissolution of image into the abyss of the unknown. It is the sacrifice of a particular discontinuous knowledge and its return to a radical continuity.The conceptual boundary between male and female, self and other dissolves; they have lost their separate existence.

It is difficult talking about love (a discredited and ineffectual word) because of the fact that subjects and objects usually drag it down into impotence.

This particular embrace on this particular day discloses itself as going on forever behind the scenes. For in this 'catastrophe' there comes a strong physical experience of androgyny, of each sex completing and balancing itself by an infusion of the other. What is communicated (from this site to a person and from a person to this site) is lightning - like loss.

This transcendence of opposites as an immediate experience beyond theory is, through the disciplines of Hinduism and Buddhism, one of the principal contributions of Indian culture to human wisdom, from which we can wisely learn.

*In front of me and inside me there's no God, no separate being, but
flickering connections¹⁶*

(In my references to the East I am not suggesting that the illumination of the East should be accepted by us unwittingly, as if we were blind beggars, but the thinking of the great alien cultures of the Orient should not be imitated by Westerners unthinkingly).

In speaking of the non-conceptual state of awareness as 'ecstatic' we come to the point where sacred-erotic imagery / text may be understood.....*ecstasy is communication.....*

Ecstasy is communication between two terms (these terms do not have to be necessarily defined) and communication possesses a value the terms didn't have: it annihilates them. Similarly, the light of a star (slowly) annihilates the star itself. The main thing is the moment of violent contact, when life slips from one person to another in a feeling of 'magical subversion'. On another level, to look at each other and laugh can be a type of erotic relation. In a general way, what comes into play in physical or psychological eroticism is the same feeling of 'magical subversion' associated with one person slipping into another.

Thus eroticism is essentially viewed as a disruptive force characterized by its antagonism to work. It is an extreme experience which entails a total giving of oneself in an effort to restore a semblance of continuity by means of communication with the other. It appears as part of the process of destroying the rational, Cartesian subject in a fusion which defies physical boundaries. In its many forms and moods, ecstasy is life itself. The etymology of the word ek-stasis means to stand outside, to be liberated from the bondage of oneself - the conceptual ego, personality and role player that one is supposed to be. It is hardly

recognised that ecstasy is a basic human need and when its positive and life sustaining forms are repressed it is inevitably sought in violence and cruelty.

Thus sexual ecstasy is initially the object of a general prohibition, hence the conclusion that the social interdiction is our first 'general knowledge' of ecstasy. As the child grows up, the prohibitions become intellectual rather than physical. Thus the natural phenomenon is rapidly mixed in with a complex and confused items of social experience which leave little room for the acquiring of an unprejudiced knowledge.

Consequently, since the prohibitions are primarily social interdictions, the problem of attaining a personal knowledge of ecstasy is the problem of 'clever disobedience'....those tendencies which impel us to know...Action consists in taking possession of things. Action introduces the known (the manufactured); then understanding, which is linked to it, relates the non-manufactured, unknown elements, one after the other, to the known. There is possession through work; work is human activity in general, intellectual, political, or economic; to which is opposed sacrifice, laughter, ecstasy, poetry, etc....which break closed systems as they take possession. Desire, laughter, poetry, unceasingly cause life to slip in the opposite direction, moving from the known to the unknown.

What is requisite for communication is a defect or 'fault'. Communication enters like death through a chink in the armour. What is required is an overlapping of two lacerations, mine, yours.¹⁷

.....
.....
.....

In the depths of the woods, as in a bedroom where two lovers are undressing, laughter and poetry are set free.¹⁸

Through the medium of art and particular types of literature (poetic - Kristeva, 'schizo' - Deleuze and Guattari, fantasy - Jackson, carnivalesque - Bakhtin, etc.), a fissure can occur that can reveal the productive basis of subjective and ideological signifying formations - a foundation that primitive societies call 'sacred' and modernity has rejected as 'schizophrenia' - "through madness, a work that seems to drown the world, to reveal there its non-sense, and to transfigure itself with the features of pathology alone, actually engages within itself the world's time, masters it, and leads it; by the madness that interrupts it, a work of art opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without answer, provokes a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself. What

is necessarily a profanation in the work of art returns to that point, and, in the time of that work swamped in madness, the world is made aware of its guilt."¹⁹

Poetry constantly surpasses its origins and because it suffers more deeply in ecstasy or in sorrow, it retains greater freedom. Values, rationality and consciousness are dethroned and placed in a series of relations that open the question of infinity.

*Poetry leads to the same place as all forms of eroticism - to the blending and fusion of separate objects. It leads us to eternity, it leads us to death, and through death to continuity. Poetry is eternity: the sun matched with the sea.*²⁰

Knowing must therefore be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. It may happen that a certain individual temporarily silences all the words that emerge from his or her interior space. Then one says nothing, because the faculty of saying has been broken off; one is in an order where words no longer in their places have ever existed, do not even propose themselves as a slight erasure of silence; one is entirely absent (from what is being said).

But the paradox is: that which causes language to be destroyed in one, also obliges one to use language. This is the price that must be paid for an art to be at all times a sort of pure beginning, which makes its creation an exercise of freedom.

A paradox is an affront to logical consistency, but may well be apt to reveal a different, more vital consistency, the consistency of a becoming, that is to say of a process of transformation in which the process itself is prior to, and more prior than, its terms. Paradox challenges our assumptions and accepted notions of reality. The paradoxical nature of poetry (or poetic, 'schizo', fantastic literature etc.) can in its psychological sense, cut through the 'known', and show us something from the unconscious. Due to this language we can begin to develop the operation of 'movement' which is so essential in the projected dissolution of our limits. It can subvert our dominant philosophical assumptions which uphold as 'reality' a coherent, single viewed entity.

Paradox is not embodied in separate expressions but in the use we make of any expression, it exists in all language, coextensive with the language of becomings and with the becoming of language itself; it is a literal enactment of a symbol, the incarnation of a double becoming that traverses quite other endeavours, that can be expressed and enacted in quite other ways. Paradox would then be the name of a form of expression for becomings, and not necessarily be signalled by paradoxical expressions. In this sense, paradox haunts language, at the point that words and phrases are taken not only in their

designation and signification, but also in the images they transmit and are inhabited by. Poetry can give us new images which become absorbed in the 'whole'. Images confer being on us, they are the pure product of the absolute imagination, are phenomena of being, of becoming. Each isolated existence emerges from itself by means of the image betraying the error of immutable isolation.

Therefore the positivity of the types of literature is not only its form, but its ability to confront us with the relationship between language and human experience. Literature, ironically, can lead to the silence which makes discourse possible. True silence takes place in the absence of words; that a pin should then drop; at the stroke of a hammer, you jump involuntarily. In this silence made of the inside, is a body without organs - entire sensibility, intensity. In the form of the experience, silence is the immeasurable, inaudible, primal breath from which all manifest discourse issues; or, speech reigns with the power to hold itself in silent experience.

The poet Rimbaud reached, without orthodox beliefs, the stage which mystics seek to attain, where there is no longer possibility for belief or disbelief, for doubt or for reflection, but only pure sensation, ecstasy and union with the Almighty.

Rimbaud's aim was to obliterate all sense of personality and to abandon himself to 'the other', the irrational spirit from which madness proceeds. The characteristic movement of mysticism is to attempt to join - even if it means crossing the night - the positivity of an existence by opening a difficult line of communication with it. Even when that existence contests itself, hollows itself out in the labour of its own negativity, infinitely withdrawing into a lightless day, a shadowless night, a visibility devoid of shape, it is still a shelter in which experience can rest. The shelter can be created as much by the law of a Word as by the open expanse of silence.

In any case, silence is the only border we can reach in the realm you and I dwell in. Even the equivocal silence of ecstasy itself isn't attainable, if it comes to that, or rather, like death, it is attainable for a moment.²¹

The function of the poet who, for Rimbaud, is identical with the seer is to discover himself, the real self dormant below the restless ego (as in alchemy - the search of the opus). This 'self' Rimbaud appears to identify with 'universal mind' which throws out its ideas 'naturally', that is, in accordance with Nature with which it seems to be identical - the *Fullness of Being*. Consequently a new definition of a poet is in view, which is; he who knows, that is to say, who transcends and names what he knows - for the poet makes in dangerous similitude to the gods.

A sensibility having become, by detachment of what attains the senses, so inner that all returns from the outside, a fall of a needle, a cracking, have an immense and distant resonance. The Hindus have noticed this peculiarity. The resonances are dispensed on the different planes of our life in the world, while the repercussions invite us to greater depth to our own existence. The reverberations bring about a change in our being. It is as though the poem, through its exuberance, awakened new depths in us.

If we live under the law of language without contesting it, these states are within us as if they didn't exist. But if we run up against this law, we can in passing our awareness upon one of these states and quieting discourse within us, linger over the surprise which it provides us. It is better then to shut oneself in, make as if it were night, remain in the suspended silence wherein we come unexpectedly upon the sleep of a child. We perceive from such a state what favours the return, increases the return.....intensity alone matters.

One attains the extreme limit in the fullness of means: it demands fulfilled beings, ignoring no audacity. In pointing to the manifestations of the witnesses disposition Deleuze remarks how the writing practice of Klossowski, Kerouac, Burroughs, Artaud, (to name but a few), tell us more about the unconscious than psychoanalysis does precisely because they do not discuss the unconscious as a theoretical object, but produce it and follow its flows. They are concerned with events, affects, assemblages, becomings, pluralities, incommensurabilities, dreams and desires - espousing the greatest art of the unconscious, illuminating the space of the night. This practice may be interpreted as an affirmation of freedom or an archaic revolt against a society that shuts out the night. The language of becoming stands in opposition to language that has been put to utilitarian use - the strict communication of language has as its object a concern for things (our relation with things), and the portion which it exteriorizes is exterior beforehand (unless language becomes perverse, comical, poetic or erotic - disjunctive). Full communication resembles flames - the electrical discharge of lightning. Its attraction is the rupturing it is built on and what increases its intensity in proportion to its depth.

For Deleuze, language permeated by the unconscious stands for the infinite possibilities of language, and all other language acts are merely partial realizations of the possibilities inherent in this language. This literary practice is seen as exploration and discovery of the possibilities of language; as an activity that liberates the subject from a number of social, psychic and linguistic networks. Linguistic 'transference' enables one to give material form to the invisible - and thus to render it capable of being experienced. The play of fragments that don't form a system but a sort of alchemical laboratory for the production of a new synthesis is crucial in language, in life. The ideal would be to let all fragments live, let all the voices speak, but in such a fluid way that they would be present but imperceptible - a

language that is addressed to the unconscious that protests, inviting us to be open to the unconscious as it plays through the whole of existence. The language of becoming, becomes the pure form of language and provides opportunities for liberation.

Transgression belongs to neither day nor night.....no before, no during, no afterwards, it is as if it were another region, a place different from all other places.²²

Alas 'the weakness of rational explanations!' : it is not reason itself being called into question though, but rather the danger of certain rationalities or rationalizations in their relations of power, their formation and activation. "Henceforth, and through the mediation of madness, it is the world that becomes culpable (for the first time in the Western world) in relation to the work of art; it is now arraigned by the work of art, obliged to order itself by its language, compelled by it to a lack of recognition, of reparation, to the task of restoring reason from that unreason and to that unreason. The madness in which the work of art is engulfed is the space of our enterprise, it is the endless path to fulfilment, it is our mixed vocation of apostle and exegete"²³ ...between heaven and hell the distance is either infinitesimal or infinite.

But the movement of life is always elsewhere, in psychic states and processes:

'The states are me'

Imagination, memory, perception exchange functions. The image is created between symbolic and imaginary, with the help of the function of the symbolic and the imaginary. In this space there is no up or down, right or left; the centre is elsewhere and nowhere - no fixed facts but permeable and mobile fictions. The most subversive texts are those which attempt to *transform* the relations of the imaginary and the symbolic. They try to set up possibilities for radical cultural transformation by making fluid the relations between these realms, suggesting or projecting the dissolution of the symbolic through violent reversal or rejections of the process of the subject's formation. The imagination can never say; was that all, for there is always more than meets the eye.

The language of becoming, in its paradox, may be counter causal which is yet another way of being of the world, of being engaged in the dialectics of the passions. The word does not have to resemble a separate or circumscribed being but can resemble what goes from one person to another when we laugh or make love. When I think this is the way things are....

....immensity.....	opens	one.....	becomes.....	lost.....
boundaries	are	dissolved.....	continuity	is reached.....

¹ Kristeva, Julia *In the Beginning Was Love Psychoanalysis and Faith*, (tr. Arthur Goldhammer) N.Y. 1987; 40 Lacan has identified the longing for this unity as the profoundest desire of the subject, referring to it as 'an eternal and irreducible human desire...an eternal desire for the nonrelationship of zero, where identity is meaningless.' see Lacan, Jacques *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, London 1986; 191

² Laing, R.D. *The Schizophrenic Experience*, in *The Politics of Experience*, N.Y. 1967; 90, 96, 101

³ Multiplicity is the inseparable manifestation, essential transformation and constant symptom of unity. Multiplicity is the affirmation of unity: becoming is affirmation of being. The affirmation of becoming is itself being, the affirmation of multiplicity is itself one. Multiple affirmation is the way in which the one affirms itself. "The one is the many, unity is multiplicity". And indeed, how would multiplicity come forth from unity and how would it continue to come forth from it after an eternity of time if unity was not actually affirmed in multiplicity? see Deleuze, Gilles *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (tr. Hugh Tomlinson) London 1983; 24

⁴ Foucault, Michel *Madness and Civilization A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (tr. Richard Howard) Great Britain 1967

⁵ Mundaka Upanisad as cited in Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, London 1975; 23

⁶ Bataille, Georges, *Guilty*, (tr. Bruce Boone, intr. Denis Hollier) San Francisco 1988; 47

⁷ see Laing, R.D. *The Schizophrenic Experience* in *The Politics of Experience*, N.Y. 1967; 85

⁸ Artaud, Antonin as cited in Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix *Anti-Oedipus Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane) London 1986; 19

⁹ [...] the proportions of attraction and repulsion on the body without organs produce, starting from zero, a series of states in the celibate machine; and the subject is born of each state in the series, is continually reborn of the following state that determines him at a given moment, consuming-consummating all these states that cause him to be born and reborn (the lived state coming first, in relation to the subject that lives it). see Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix op. cit.; 20

¹⁰ Nietzsche, Bataille, as cited in Bataille, Georges *Inner Experience*, (tr. , intr. Leslie Anne Boldt) N.Y. 1988; 27

¹¹ *ibid*; 28

¹² *ibid*; 37

¹³ Bataille, as cited in Buck, Paul *Violent Silence Celebrating Georges Bataille*, The Georges Bataille Event, 1984; 97

¹⁴ *ibid*; 95

¹⁵ Bataille, *Guilty*, 93

¹⁶ *ibid*; 80

¹⁷ *ibid*; 30

¹⁸ *ibid*; 117

¹⁹ op. cit; Foucault, 288.

²⁰ Bataille, Georges *Death and Sensuality A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo*, N.Y. 1984; 25

²¹ Bataille, *Guilty*; 8

²² Blanchot, Maurice as cited in Jackson; Rosemary *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, London 1984; 79

²³ op. cit. Foucault; 288

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Seminar II Paper

The Incarnation of Light

*You have to be like the place of the ark,
which took up no space at all, so fully humbled
that you see yourself as nothing,
not a being at all. Then you can be called
'nothing', and the Creator who is called
'no limit' or endless can contract into you.*

Understand this.

Menahem Nahem of Chemobyl

Prefatory Note on Style

The writing method adopted in this paper is defined by the nature of the speculative material, therefore I have decided on the poetic. The content is often indeterminate, resisting fixed interpretations. The free play of ideas and possibilities must appear and retreat (as does the appearance of any reality), each with its own integrity but inflected constantly by a dynamic interaction between them. As in my practice of art I am intent upon maintaining a discourse which is evocative, which suggests rather than defines. I see the character of this material as a series of speculative and open proposals. I have adopted the procedure of footnoting only key specific quotations which set up or complete an area of discourse. My research has been drawn from the bibliography provided.

Roland Barthes, when seeing an image of himself declares "For the photograph is the advent of myself as other: - a cunning dissociation of consciousness from Identity" ¹

When I look at a portrait of my family I ask, which one am I ?; for there are two people who look the same, who look back; myself and my twin sister. My intrigue for this image and the fascination it arouses has led to an exploration of otherness and sameness which leads to the search for the Other: with and without, (inside and outside), discontinuity and continuity.....I cannot tell which person I am, neither can my friends...my father could not tell us apart when we were young...I feel invisible...do I exist ?...but I know I exist, I act in the world, but my limits spill over to an-*other*...at times there are no limits....should there be a limit?...My sister was born first; am I a part of her or is she a part of me...we are a whole...In the cycle of life was she born to live life and was I born to die....or do we meet at the point of fusion from life to death...from death to life or transition...do we live this fusion...This fascination has become my obsession....Why is it that *we* are alive here and now, why is it that *we* are identical twins ?

In the Symposium Plato described being as something whole and rounded; a universe of ball creatures. The story goes that Zeus put an end to the polymorphous pleasure experienced by these creatures by cutting them in half. According to Paul Foss, in his article 'Tales Told Twice', Zeus did such 'a good job that afterwards they carried deep within them more painful than the visible scar of the navel, the internal mark of this scission, the memory of their lost totality, traces of a longing for the other half.'²

The occurrence of twins is rich for an exploration of otherness and sameness, of multiplicity and oneness, of discontinuity and continuity - the metaphysical notion of the two beings working as an harmonious one. Two of everything, the search for your other half, mistaken identities, mirror imagining, substitution, the doppelganger, the lateral line and cloning, discontinuity and continuity - the facts, fictions, mythology and apocrypha on twins is abundant.

* * *

*...To be one: Paradise! To be two: Bliss! But to be both and neither is unspeakable...*³

Eroticism is a state of communication revealing a quest for a possible continuance of being beyond the confines of the self.

George Bataille suggests that death means continuity of being. Reproduction leads to the discontinuity of beings, but brings into play their continuity: that is to say, it is intimately

linked with death. Death is identified with continuity, and both of these concepts are equally fascinating. This fascination is the dominant element in eroticism. Eroticism, in all its implicit and explicit forms is a particular mode of knowing, it calls our inner life into play. In human consciousness eroticism is that within mankind which calls one's being into question.

Bataille divides eroticism into three types; that is physical, emotional, and religious. (When Bataille speaks of religion he does not mean *a* particular religion, but religion in general). Common to all eroticism is its sacramental character. The physical and the emotional forms of eroticism are to be met with, outside the religious sphere proper. At the same time the quest for continuity of existence systematically pursued beyond the immediate world signifies an essentially religious intention, that is the subjective experience of religion - an inner experience. Continuity of being as opposed to discontinuity has to be understood in this context so as the broader meaning of eroticism and the unity of the whole underlying its forms will not escape us.

Sexual reproduction brings in a new kind of transition from discontinuity to continuity. Sperm and ovum are to begin with discontinuous entities, but they *unite*, and consequently a continuity comes into existence between them to form a new entity from the death and disappearance of the separate beings. The new entity is itself discontinuous, but it bears within itself the transition to continuity, fatal to both, to two separate beings. Insignificant as these changes may seem, they are fundamental to all forms of life. In order to make them clear, Bataille suggests that you try to imagine yourselves changing from the state you are in, to one in which your whole self is completely doubled: he states that you could not survive this process since the doubles you have turned into are essentially different from you. Each of these doubles is necessarily distinct from you, as you are now.

If this is the case one questions the event and experience of identical twins. Bataille says that to be truly identical one of the doubles would have to be actually *continuous* with the other, and not distinct from it. Identical twins are formed by the splitting of a single fertilised egg. They are the equivalent of genetic clones. The ideal double is at once the same and the other, the closest and most remote, illuminating a radical difference within identity....Am I the same and the other.....am I *continuous* with my sister.....am I *continuous* with you?

The only new element in sexual reproduction is the fusion of the two minute entities, tiny cells, the male and female gametes. But the fusion makes the fundamental continuity finally plain; *it shows that lost continuity can be found again*. The discontinuousness of sexual

beings gives rise to a dim and alienating world where individual separateness has terrifying foundations; the anguish of death and pain has bestowed on this gulf of separation a silence, dismal and hostile.

Yet within this unhappy world lost continuity can be found again if fertilization takes place; fertilization, fusion, that is, would be unthinkable if the apparent discontinuousness of the simplest animated beings were not an illusion; the whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participants as they are in their normal lives. Bataille suggests that if you imagine a fusion between yourself and another human being similar to that between the sperm and the ovum, you can quite easily picture the change he is talking about (we have images before we have words).

Bataille says that if a reconciliation between the objective reality of reproduction and the subjective experience of eroticism is possible it has some other basis. One thing is fundamental: the objective fact of reproduction calls into question within the subjective consciousness the feeling of self, the feeling of being and of the limits of the isolated being. It questions the discontinuity with which the feeling of self is necessarily bound up, even a vague feeling of self belongs to a discontinuous being. But this discontinuity is never absolute; with sexuality particularly, a sense of the existence of others, beyond the feeling of self suggests a possible continuity as opposed to the original discontinuity. Other individuals, in sexuality, are continually putting forward the possibility of continuity; others are continually threatening a rent in the seamless garment of the separate individuality.

Death and reproduction are as diametrically opposed as negation and affirmation. Death really the opposite process to the process ending in birth, yet these opposite processes can be reconciled.⁴

What Bataille has been saying enables us to grasp the unity of the domain of eroticism open to us through a conscious refusal to limit ourselves within our individual personalities. Eroticism opens the way to death. Death opens the way to the denial of our individual lives. Without doing violence to our inner selves, are we able to bear a negation that carries us to the farthest bounds of possibility? Continuity is what we are after, but generally only if that continuity which the death of discontinuous beings can alone establish, is not the victor in the long run. Affirmation of life and affirmation of death reveals itself as one; to concede one without the other is a restriction that finally excludes all possibility of infinity.⁵ Each moment of life is negation and affirmation 'at the same time', that is, absence of Time.

The discontinuous being does not disappear altogether at death but leaves traces that may even last forever.

* * *

*With all its eyes the creature-world beholds
the open, But our eyes, as though reversed,
encircle it on every side, like traps.⁶*

We are caught in a trap, the romantic notion of the 'endless revolution'.⁷ The trap is an enclosure and by extension if the self is limited as is the trap, the trap of the 'endless revolution' and the desire to get beyond is but a consequence of the dream of an unmediated existence, free from the enclosing construction of the self. This structure has often been described as a chamber. As early as 1696 Locke uses the figure of the dark room or camera obscura as a model for human consciousness.

For methinks the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut off from the light, with only some little opening left to let in external visible resemblances or ideas of things without: would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion it might very much resemble the understanding of man in reference to all objects of sight, and the ideas of them.⁸

The appearance of timelessness in the photographic image fortells the certainty of death within the dark room. Death is the separation from Light that already was - the light outside the chamber. Only through the active imagination derived from contemplation can *union* be achieved - the darkness longs to be absorbed in the light.

Darkness too is a created thing, as Scripture tells us, 'He forms the light out of the darkness'(Isa. 45:7). But the matter is as the Zohar has told us; Darkness longs to be absorbed in the light. As the light was brought into the house, the darkness was drawn into it.⁹

What the seventeenth century mystic from Chemobyl is describing is also the figure of the camera obscura. This image derives from Plato's cave, becomes Locke's model for consciousness, passes through the early writings of Marx as a model of ideology and arrives at the present, fulfilled as the 'pencil of Nature' or 'writing with light' Photography.

I am the reference of every photograph, and this is what generates my astonishment in addressing myself to the fundamental question: why is it that I am alive here and now? Of course, more than any other arts, Photography offers an immediate presence to the world - a co-presence; but this presence is not only a political order ("to participate by the image in contemporary events"), it is also of a metaphysical order.¹⁰

Bataille's concern becomes my obsession: to substitute for the individual isolated discontinuity a feeling of profound continuity.

....Barthes, when looking at photographs realized "that some provoked tiny jubilations, as if they referred to a stilled centre, an erotic or lacerating value buried in myself."¹¹ Eroticism always entails a breaking down of established patterns, the patterns of the regulated social order basic to our discontinuous mode of existence as defined and separate individuals. Eroticism can be envisaged as an experience wedded to life itself, or more deeply, as an object of passion and poetic contemplation.

Is not our desire to bring into a world founded on discontinuity all the continuity such a world can sustain? And if it is only the illusion of the enclosure of the trap that impedes the contact between the darkness inside the chamber and the light without; by reversing the order, challenging the darkness of the chamber, we are choosing life over death

* * *

In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth

And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day

Light is the pre-eminent condition under which the world of appearances is disclosed, and 'illumination' is a central metaphor for the presence of being and enlightenment in Western Culture. The interconnection and continuity of life as seen and felt through countless works of art and, in particular the photograph, which not only depicts light but must use it physically in creation, may confer on each second of our existence the character of mystery.

If faith is the aspiration to the unknown (whether it be in science or God), the object of faith is absolutely and necessarily this one thing - Mystery - an 'erotic sense of reality' (Norman O. Brown). When this 'mystery' exists in man's eye, his 'air' will faithfully reproduce it. When the mystery does not exist, his 'air' will express only 10110100010111010 (Binary code); an evidence that 'cannot be narrated because it lies a breath beyond language'(George Steiner), a breath beyond the rational.

Light breaks forth; the burst of light, the dispersion that resonates or vibrates dazzlingly -in clarity clamours but does not clarify. The breaking forth of light, the shattering reverberation of a language to which no language can be given ¹²

If in epistemological terms the photographic image is a distorting medium, and a possibility of an external verification is denied, then enlightenment can only be maintained as a process of coming to self-consciousness. The contradiction between epistemology or structuralism and phenomenology is that between representation-as absence and presence. To attribute presence to the body *in* the photograph would be to reify it, to render it a thing in itself, a fetish or a commodity which would mark its true nature as an action of a person, a social relation. On the other hand, enlightenment requires that the other be present to consciousness. This contradiction precipitates in the surface trace as the presence of absence and the absence of presence.¹³

From the light source to the camera, a track or path is engraved on the surface of the photographic film as a record of gesture. Like the track or spoor of an animal, it is a mark left behind by something which was there; an index which, unlike the animal, is present only as the absence of that something which perpetually eludes capture, resembling the ghosts of objects in Man Ray's photograms of the early 20's. Because the representation cannot be identical with what it represents then the condition of representation is spatio-temporal non-identity. The marks of absence in the photographic image reveal what the ideology of commodity conceals, that the photograph doesn't 'make present', but defers its subject in representation. These records of light on the surface of the image, are the photographic equivalent of what Derrida, in a reading of Heidegger, calls the 'trace'.

The trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has, properly speaking, no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace. Effacement must always be able to overtake the trace; otherwise it would not be a trace but an indestructible and monumental substance. In addition, and from the start, effacement constitutes it as a trace - effacement establishes the trace appearing, makes it issue forth from itself in its very position.¹⁴

Upon remainder the name and the form are founded, upon remainder the world is founded.....Being and non-being, both are in the remainder, deathlvigor¹⁵

In the search for something of one's own essence it is a question of finding the other and not of duplicating oneself, by following the trail of the unknown part of self. The image of my family portrait comes back to me...am I duplicated?...there are two that look the same... when I say I...there are two mes...am I one or multiple?...my sisters (I have two) 'look' different...does that mean there is difference?...this ephemeral thing called individuality seems very fragile....when my limits spill over to my twin sister do they touch my other sisters?...do others (but where do others start?) yearn for a continuity with everything that is?.....Just as 'I' has no meaning without a corresponding 'you', can the self be imagined without the multitude of images whose potential image exist from the beginning in the human retina?

Could an image suggest the other possible faces of a subject; do they tend to reveal a face that could be ours? The shadow of otherness that perturbs the transparency of any mirror is strengthened in view of the human figure retained by the camera and apparently made prisoner in an immovable appearance.

The image is death, a fixation in time; the symbol is life. An image is a false eternity. True eternity must be sought in the innate, unexpressed, consciousness which becomes the intuitive knowledge of simultaneity.

Such a gaze is not a spectacle, but another form of vision, ecstasy.¹⁶

The trace is the figure of 'writing' as Derrida interprets it in opposition to the supposed presence of speech, in its operation of the perpetual deferral of presence through *differance* which Derrida spells with an 'a' which is silent in speech: *differance* refers simultaneously to the differentiation of structure which makes language possible, and the temporal action of deferral. Presence is inflected by the non-presence from which it has to differentiate itself, and its 'writing' defers the supposed presence which it invokes. One could say the same of photography which means, literally, writing or drawing with light.

The trace assumes a material presence; but without referring that presence to the 'authentic' touch of the artist as its origin. Specific sources of illumination produce 'gestural' traces indicating the anonymity of the codes which function as a 'collective unconscious' in our reading of images.

The doubling of the image demonstrates that neither side is, of itself, true, but also that there is, none the less, a real world to which the images refer and which acts as a determinant - photographic images can provoke the desire to know in order to unmask dissemblance. Dissemblance is negated in order to maintain the possibility of enlightenment, the phenomenological education of consciousness through confrontation with the Other.

As an aspect of the Other, the demonic has been prominent in the work of Klossowski. The demonic, says Klossowski, is not carnal but spiritual. The modern world's malady does not consist in the prevalence of the external over the internal, of false clothes over naked truth, but rather in the fact that the spiritual can no longer be incarnated, in the failed possibility of possession. The phenomenon of possession is not therefore a manifestation of the demonic, but rather its very exorcism. Because of the simple fact that it is incarnate, the demonic ceases to be demonic. From this comes the liberating force shared by both art and eroticism. Both furnish an exterior covering, an image, a simulacrum of that which otherwise lacks reality. They make present what is absent. They make visible what is spiritual. Bodies and art participate in the same work of salvation. They confer form and they redeem what in itself is only nonbeing, negation and contradiction. Both are the actualization of something incommunicable and unrepresentable. This something, which Klossowski defines as "demonic", does not come from within, from subjectivity, from the self, rather, it comes from outside the self. Thus, it is not expression but resemblance. Both eroticism and art move in a sphere of mimesis. The imitation, however, can never be verified, because the original, the phantasm, the demon, can never appear as such. For Klossowski eroticism is inseparable from the experience of incarnation. ¹⁷

The awareness of eroticism belongs to a darker side, it leads to a silent awakening.

In the photograph, the latent image, when made visible becomes the recollection of consciousness, in light, which is both an inward and outward transition of mind and spirit.

It could be said that the abstract Spirit needs a concrete support, which, by its nature, must be the synthesis (located in Time and Space) of the form to be given to the Spirit so that it may have available the body necessary for experience. Later, this support is cut off, leaving the new support in its purity.

The photographic image is itself illusory, inviting an encounter dependant upon a suspension of disbelief in the photographic fact of a two-dimensional surface differentiated by tonal and chromatic incidents. What is of interest is a double construct (that of the initial

object/event from which light is reflected into the camera lens, and that of the photograph which acts as its representative) whose interface is the flat field of the photographic print - a meeting point of two realities, meshed as a reciprocal and singular 'moment' allowing a heightened perception of their mutually suspended presence.

*...Light is the expeller of Darkness....*¹⁸

*The wise men of old, who made temples and statues in the wish that the gods should be present to them, looking to the nature of the All had in mind that the nature of Soul is everywhere easy to attract, but that if someone were to construct something sympathetic to it and be able to receive a part of it, it would of all things receive soul most easily. That which is sympathetic to it is what imitates it in some way, like a mirror able to catch (the reflections of) a form.*¹⁹

Is not what Plotinus describing here, yet another figure of the camera obscura? Could not the camera obscura be this 'sympathetic construct' - 'like a mirror able to catch (the reflections of) a form.' The darkness of the chamber has already been challenged; we reverse the stress, turn the collector of images into a projector of light, back through the lens, meeting the light without. And could it not be possible that the resultant image be a meeting point of two worlds, a catalyst for the viewer to a 'metaphysical order'.

*....arrested movement in the comprehension of beauty....*²⁰

*How did God produce and create this world? Like a person who gathers in and contracts one's breath, so the smaller might contain the larger, so God contracted God's light into a hands breadth, according to God's own measure, and in that darkness God cut boulders and hewed rocks.*²¹

The image of God as light had an ancient pedigree, from the Baal of Semitic paganism, from the Egyptian Ra, from the Persian Mazda - all personifications of the sun or of the sun's beneficent action - to the Platonic 'Sun' of the Ideal, the Good. In the *Phaedo*, Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates a doctrine of two worlds: the world of murky imperfection to which our mortal senses have access, and an 'upper world' of perfection and light. Discursive speech is the tangled and inept medium to which we are condemned in the former, while in the latter all things are communicated usually as a pure and unmediated intelligibility which has no need for words. The idea that there are two quite distinct forms of communication, words and images, and that the latter is the more direct, passed via the Neo-Platonists into the Christian tradition. There was now held to be a divine language of

things, richer than the language of words; those who apprehend the difficult but divine truths enshrined in things do so in a flash, without the need for words and arguments. As E.H. Gombrich has observed, such beliefs 'are of more than antiquarian interest. They still affect the way we talk and think about the art of our own time'.²²

I am that living and fiery essence of the divine substance that glows in the beauty of the fields. I shine in the water, I burn in the sun and the moon and the stars. ²³

Light - that light immanent in the creature from the beginning. This is the Principle of Redemption ²⁴

Plotinus was a philosopher in the third century A.D. who lay claim to belong to the Platonic tradition. He regarded the body as a reflection of the soul. His philosophy was not so much the occasion of synthesis but a crossroad between two worlds (an expansion of consciousness that comes from 'direct synthetic vision'). In this sense, the symbol, the image, is the object, exterior to us, which awakens innate knowledge through the senses. This creates our intuitive knowledge of the simultaneous, a *continuity* in which a *discontinuity* is located.

Theoretically, it was a philosophy based on a notion of spiritual light. This philosophy did not correspond either to its heritage of Greek cosmology, to the extent that it no longer located its reference points in an immutable heaven; or the Christian eschatology that it conditioned, neither was it bound up with a promise of final redemption.

The psychology that Plotinus invoked was centred on the speculative capacities of the human soul. This psychological concept was based on a model that shall be called Narcissism - although the ethic it referred to condemned Narcissus.²⁵

In practice it manifested itself in a detachment simultaneously radical and serene. The path to these two states was contemplation, a fully active contemplation, turning it into the only activity that is truly productive.

For Plotinus, everything starts with the One²⁶, a supreme principle, in the mold of the Platonic Good, but one that encompasses a whole new world. The One contemplates itself unceasingly and this contemplation produces all that is. From the One that is nothing, "since all things come from it"²⁷, proceeds 'Intellect'(nous), which encompasses the totality of Being and emanates from the contemplation of the One by itself, just as light emanates²⁸ from a luminous source. The Ideas that fill the intelligible world imply the One, which is

their common origin, and each one plays its part in explicating it. Conversely, the One manifests itself through Intellect and is expressed in Ideas.

This movement of procession or emanation provoked by the self contemplation of the One then leads to a second movement, namely the conversion of Intelligible Realities into their origin (the Ideas are immersed in permanent contemplation, not of themselves but of the One from which they emanate). And this contemplation too, is productive, in that it projects the radiance from the One and gives rise to a second movement of reflection or, to use the Plotonian term, a second hypostasis; Soul (*psuche*); "the wanderer of the metaphysical world" 29

According to Plotinus, first there was the soul. The soul of the Universe which envelopes the whole of *life* just as Intellect encompassed the whole of *being*. Next there are the individual souls, those of the stars and also those of men, animals and even plants. Immaterial as they are, these souls are 'intensively' distinct from one another, that is, like so many degrees of intensity, but without being separated spatially, without being discontinuous, as the inhabitants of the material world are. Furthermore, this interpenetration of the individual souls within the Universal Soul depends upon their communion in a second movement of conversion. In this movement, the souls are converted to the Intellect from which they proceed and, through the Intellect, to the One that finds expression in the intelligible world and of which the Soul of the World is a second manifestation. Finally, the contemplation of the Intellect by the souls that proceed from it produces a further movement of procession, hence a new hypostasis: Nature (*kosmos*), with all its animated bodies. These bodies capture only the remote reflections of the spiritual light because they are formed on the surface of dark, absorbent Matter - Matter that corresponds to non-being as Intellect is identified with being.

Plotinus' cosmogony thus reflects from or is the extension of the fall of light, emanating from the One, on the material world: a fall that is not a fall from grace but the very process through which the One radiates its brilliance. The diffusion of this light engenders reflections that are more subdued the further they are from the source of light, although, whatever their level, these reflections remain to their conversion, focal points of intellectual diffusion, they remain *continuous*. At every level this philosophy of spiritual light is based solely upon the notion of contemplation that subsumes the two-fold movement of procession from the One and conversion to the One. One reason is that ancient optical science identified rays of light with rays of vision. The One and its series of hypostases can thus be seen both as a contemplative eye and as a source of radiant light.

Plotinus emphasizes the difference between the radiation of spiritual light that produces the Universe on which it falls - a fall that is necessary and in no way baneful - and the fall that is peculiar to man and that is the consequence of the audacity shown by his soul.

Plotinus makes a distinction between cosmogonic necessity (namely the constitution of the body as a reflection of the soul) and psychological audacity (the decline of the soul - and its inclination - as it is captivated by its own reflection). However, a human soul that is in love with wisdom rather than prey to audacity still possesses a body, and it neither can nor should prevent itself from illumination of "what is below", for this "is not a sin, just as casting a shadow is not a sin".³⁰ But its reflection leaves it unaffected, not in the sense that it cuts itself off from that reflection, but in that it is no longer there, where the reflection is; and from that the soul is no longer there because "the whole soul is looking to the intelligible world" ³¹

The audacious soul, in contrast, turns away from Ideas and in that same movement detaches itself from the other souls and is absorbed into the body it animates - becoming *discontinuous*. Captivated by the body, it lives in isolation, whereas when it was contemplating Intellect, it lived in communion with the souls of the celestial bodies and the Soul of the Universe; it was *continuous*.

The audacious soul that is absorbed in its own body is called Narcissus and Narcissus is said to be solitary. But it is not because he is excessively present to himself; it is rather because he lacks, by decree (you shall not see yourself), that reflected presence identity, the self-same - the basis upon which a living relation with life, which is other, can be ventured.

The fall of radiant light that originates in the One and encompasses the procession of the hypostases is followed by the human soul's fall when it becomes fascinated by its own reflection.

To be lost, capsize. Desire of the fall, desire which is the push and pull of the fall ³²

The human soul abandons itself to this fatal decline as soon as it inclines toward its material image: " If it declined, it was obviously because it had forgotten the intelligible realities"³³ The soul's error (audacity) is now envisaged as a mirror; "But the souls of men see their images as if in the mirror of Dionysus and come to be on that level with a leap from above."³⁴

If Narcissus does not recognize himself, is it because what he sees is an image: and

because the similitude of an image is not likeness to anyone or anything: the image characteristically resembles nothing. Narcissus falls 'in love' with the image because every image is attractive: the image exerts the attraction of the void, and of death in its falsity.

And whosoever falls is not one, but several. Multiple fall. Each one restrains himself, clinging to another - another who is himself and is the dissolution - dispersion - of the self, and the restraint is sheer haste, panicky flight, death outside death.³⁵

The audacity of the human soul is certainly akin to the 'strange infatuation' that Ovid attributed to Narcissus. His error was not really a matter of intrinsic malevolence; rather, it was an optical illusion. The audacious soul only inclines towards the body because it does not realize that this body to which it is subjecting itself, is none other than its own reflection in the mirror of matter. When it inclines in this way, it behaves "as if someone looking at this image and not knowing where it came from, should pursue it." ³⁶

For a man runs to the image and wants to seize it as if it were the reality (like a beautiful reflection playing on the water, which some story somewhere, I think, said riddlingly a man wanted to catch and sank down into the stream and disappeared); then this man who clings to beautiful bodies, but in soul, not in body, sinks down into the dark depths, where Intellect has no delight, and stays blind in Hades, consorting with shadows both there and here. ³⁷

Narcissism thus expresses the tragic fall resulting from a folly that is all too human. The psychological error that the human soul commits, despite the fact that it itself proceeds solely from the light, is that it tarnishes its own brilliance by becoming fixated with the portion of matter that reflects it. The Narcissistic soul causes darkness to increase and light to decrease and thereby becomes associated with Evil. The narcissistic soul, in love with its own body, wishes to become united with it.

An identity perpetually displaced; narcissism, masking and disintegration.

The water in which Narcissus sees what he shouldn't is not a mirror, capable of producing a distinct and definite image. What he sees is the invisible in the visible - in the picture the undepicted, the unstable unknown of a representation without presence, which reflects no model: he sees the nameless one whom only the name he does not have could hold at a distance. It is madness he sees and death.

The relationship with oneself involves love as well as abjection; one's own image, as well as that of some other, usually pre-eminent and unknown.

The desire for union, Eros (*eros*), is unquestionably a good impulse, but in these circumstances it was misguided. Above all, though, the narcissistic desire for union was ill-conceived: first, because the human soul seized by it did not realize that what it loved in the body it wished to belong to, was none other than its own reflection; its own image, second, because, as a result of this mistake, it did not understand that the unity it was really seeking could not be a union of heterogeneous elements, that is to say, union between soul and body. The aspect of the myth which Ovid finally forgets is that Narcissus, bending over the spring, does not recognize himself in the fluid image. It is thus not himself, not his perhaps non-existent "I" that he loves.

If it is not himself he desires, could it be that what he desires is the memory of a lost totality. This longing for the other half of ourselves that is lost, a longing for continuity, is the basis of every great love story. Otherness is at the heart of the grand search. Acceptance or separation from the difference and sameness of the other as double leads to a resolution of tension between competing parts. All separation is violent unless it is a transition, and even this is also painful. (But for us who name Narcissus and establish him as a double Same - as containing, that is to say, unknowingly, and knowing full well the Other within the same, death in life - for us, what Narcissus sees is the essence of the secret; a schism which in fact is not a schism and which would give him a divided self without any I, while also depriving him of all relations to others). The glistening of the spring shows something clear - the attractive image of someone - yet at the same time blurring, it prevents the stable fixity of sheer visibility (which could be appropriated) and drags everything - he who is called upon to see and what it is he believes he sees - into a confusion of desire and fear (terms which hide the hidden, a death which would not be death).

For Plotinus the only true unity to which the soul can aspire is the fulfilment of a process of simplification or purification.

Firstly, the human soul only wants to find unity but makes a mistake, thinking that it has found that unity in the autonomy of the pair that it forms in conjunction with the body. Entirely given over to an irresistible desire, it does not perceive that the fusion of soul and body is in reality nothing but a movement of dispersion, since matter disperses into space that which is distinguishable at the level of the Universal Soul only in terms of intensity. Furthermore, this desire for fusion between soul and body truly produces an act of obscurantism since, even if the body does not totally absorb the light of the mind or soul, the human soul can preserve the purity of its brilliance only by turning away from it.

The teaching of the myth would be that one must not trust oneself to the fascination of

images which not only deceive, but render all love mad. For a distance is necessary if desire is to be born of not being immediately satisfied. This is what Ovid has expressed by having Narcissus say: 'Possession dispossessed me'.

The true union that the soul ought to seek should thus be achieved by withdrawing into itself, to inhabit itself, instead of uniting with this other, that is its body, its image.

For Barthes, this "longing to inhabit is fantasmatic, deriving from a second sight which seems to bear me forward to a utopian time, or to carry me back to somewhere inside myself":³⁸ a double movement.

However, this process of purification or simplification, which ought to inspire the soul and counter its audacity, is far from being an end in itself. Plotinus sees it as a first stage that may allow the human to convert itself to intelligible reality and commune with other souls. The Universal Soul and the individual souls it encompasses are, just as the Intellect and Ideas which compose the intellect, all manifestations or expressions of the One - the diffusion of the noetic light that constitutes them never at any time interrupts the continuity that exists between them - it is *continuous*.

The effluence that, for Plotinus, leads from the One to the souls, makes each emanation different in degree from the rest without it ever being a separate entity on its own, without it being *discontinuous*. Thus, when a human soul turns away from its body to convert itself to the Intellect from which it proceeds, it is launching itself not toward something other than itself - even something superior but toward the very Spirit that shines brightly within it.

Narcissus, seeing the image he does not recognize, sees in the divine aspect, the nonliving, eternal part (for the image is incorruptible) which, without his knowing it, is his and which he does not have the right to look at, lest he fall prey to a vain desire. Thus one might say that he dies of being immortal, of having the immortality of appearance - the immortality which his metamorphosis into a flower attests.

Such a bold mixture of dialectic and of sheer-(mystical) elevation through the hope of salvation must not be underestimated; for at stake in it is what all moral thinking and all intellectual disciplines have aimed for. If there is to be one thing to be retained from classical commentators, it is that Narcissus never began to live. This child god, never tolerating the touch of another, never speaking - did not know of himself, for, according to the command he is supposed to have received, he has to always keep turned from himself.

Thus he is very similar to the child-god always already dead and nonetheless destined to a fragile, attenuated dying.

Who shall depict a child against the starry background of its own self-sufficient world, with something in its hand - a kind of measuring rod, perhaps - to indicate the distance between that world and our own? What action or gesture or emblem shall suggest the closeness, the terribly unconscious closeness, of that little life to death? Death passes into the life of a child. Or, perhaps, by the core of an apple, - a dish of apples standing by suggesting that the child has just eaten one, and its parted lips revealing the presence of a core, which unlike a grown up person, it has not ejected, and which is going to choke it - that death has always been present in the child, as the core and pips have always been present in the fruit.

....but the 'goodness' of the child, which can allow death to dwell within it even before its life has really begun, is beyond description and comprehension.³⁹

* * *

According to Schlegel, every poet is Narcissus. But all artists are poets; in that creation - poetry - image is absolute subjectivity and the poet is a living subject in the work that reflects him, just as the artist is by virtue of having transformed his life into art by incarnating in it his pure subjectivity. Another way of understanding this is that in the poem, where the poet writes himself, he does not become conscious of himself. Through a silent mediation, he makes perceptible the uninterrupted affirmation, the giant murmur in which language, the image, by opening, becomes imaginary, an eloquent depth, an indistinct fullness that is empty. The source of this silence is the self-effacement to which the person who writes is invited. One is dismissed, excluded from what is written - unable to be present by virtue of the nonpresence of their very death - one has to renounce all conceivable relations of a self (either living or dying) to the poem which henceforth belongs to the other, or else will remain without any belonging at all. The poet is Narcissus to the extent that Narcissus is an anti-Narcissus; he who, turned away from himself - causing the detour of which he is the effect, dying of not recognizing himself - leaving the trace of what has not occurred.

Does Narcissus die? Scarcely: having turned into an image he dissolves in the immobile dissolution of the imaginary, where he is washed away without knowing it, losing a life he does not have.

The discovery of a mirror image, in the early years discovered joyfully, says Lacan, returns us in our imagination to a 'polymorphous' form of totality that compensates for the opposing fantasy of fragmentation based on the lack of motor-coordination in early infancy and the primordial separation caused at birth.

After some fleeting perception of eternity we fall back into the flux of time, and flounder there in a kind of desperate dividedness. No sooner have we concentrated upon one thing than we think of some other thing. We are perpetually oscillating between what we are doing and what we might be doing.

We are 'half-filled masks', only half-heartedly and half-attentively playing the parts allotted to us.⁴⁰

In the oscillating intermediary zone between a consciousness not yet formed and an unconsciousness that lets itself be seen and thereby turns vision into fascination, one of the versions of the imaginary offers its lesson: man can make himself in accordance with the image, but this means that he is still more apt to unmake himself in accordance with the image, exposing himself to the illusion of a similitude which may be beautiful, or fatal, but which is in any case the illusion of an evasive death that consists entirely in the repetition of a mute misapprehension.

This realm of fascination, where what we see seizes our vision and makes it interminable. Our gaze solidifies into light, where light is the absolute sheen of an eye that we do not see. We nevertheless do not leave off seeing because it is the mirror image of our own gaze this realm is supremely attractive, fascinating; light that is also the abyss, horrifying and alluring, light in which we sink.

Of course, the myth does not say anything so explicit. Greek myths are seductive because of a concealed, oracular wisdom which elicits the infinite process of divining.

Those who are inspired by their desire for unity and who do not mistake gleaming reflections for the burning source of light, are devoting themselves to exploring their own psychic space, their own internal life deep within which they discover radiant Intellect and, even deeper, the One of which Intellect is already a reflection.

Even though Plotinus condemns the narcissistic venture, it is this same Narcissistic structure that underpins the whole process of the soul's conversion. In other words, it is important to distinguish between the specular (or mirror-gazing) form of narcissism and the speculative variety in which eroticism is correctly directed toward the inside of the soul and

the internal light that constitutes it. Thus, the psychological error of misplaced audacity that drags the soul downward, contains the condition of its own repair: to reverse the dramatic course of events, all the soul needs to do is realize that what it loves in that body with which it initially desires to be united is nothing other than its own reflection.

As soon as the human soul perceives that it is moved by its own ardour and not by the body, which does no more than reflect it imperfectly, it turns not simply away from this dark mirror, but right around and converts itself to the source of light from which it proceeds and which it now discovers deep inside itself: a double movement. A gentle light (not the full glare of science), shows us a reality difficult to come to terms with compared with the reality of things; it makes possible a silent awakening.

What's needed is just this: Loneliness, vast inner loneliness. To walk in oneself and to meet no one for hours on end, - that's what one must be able to attain.⁴¹

But perhaps the error was necessary in its own way, to the extent that it involved instruments of repair and salvation, and in that, it suggested the form that the process of conversion should take; what had to be done was re-identify the effect/reflection and its cause/source.

* * *

From the unity of the individual subject (be it a fissured subject, always double, vainly desiring), to the Universal, supreme One, the multiple, the different will ever have been a moment of transitions: reflection of the great Presence which, even bearing no name, is consecrated on high.⁴²

Even though the body is rejected as a legitimate partner for the soul, the mirror gazing or specular relationship between the body and the soul and the movement that this inspires constitute the model for Plotinian speculation; and that speculation leads to the human soul making the ultimate effort by which it finds itself, for a moment of ecstasy, alone with the One: "seeing with one's own self alone That alone."⁴³

The adventures of the human soul bestow an ambiguous status upon the human body since it is the body's feeble, yet real capacity to reflect the noetic light that causes not only the soul's fall but its "reconversion."

Plotinus would have Narcissus say: 'Dispossessed: I took possession'.

No longer a mirror image, the self takes on a social symbolic function, yet it will not cease to be an object or an image of synthesis for that individual, who, in his innermost being responds to the structure of division and multiplicity. Its own images are the origin of pleasure and conflict; our most deeply hidden fears and hallucinations, our most primal eroticism rushes to it.

* * *

- ¹Barthes, Roland *Camera Lucida Reflections on Photography*, (tr. Richard Howard) London 1984; 29
- ²Foss, Paul *Tales Told Twice Art and Text*, No. 11, Summer 1984; 4
- ³ibid.
- ⁴Bataille, Georges *Death and Sensuality A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo*, N.Y. 1984; 55
- ⁵Affirmation is necessary and sufficient to create two negations, two negations form part of the powers of affirming which are modes of being of affirmation as such. Deleuze, Gilles *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (tr. Hugh Tomlinson) London 1983; 180
- ⁶Rilke, Rainer Maria as cited in Blanchot, Maurice *The Sirens' Song Selected Essays*, (ed. Gabriel Josipovici, tr. Sacha Rabinovitch), England 1982; 154
- ⁷see Rosen, Charles and Zemer, Henri *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art*, N.Y. 1984; 9
- ⁸Locke, John *An Essay on Human Understanding*, 21st. ed., bk. II, chapt. xi, sec. 17, London 1805; 142
- ⁹Menahem Nahem of Chernobyl, *The Light of the Eyes*, (ed. Arthur Green) N.Y. 1982; 85
- ¹⁰op cit. Barthes; 84
- ¹¹op. cit. Barthes; 16
- ¹²op. cit. Barthes; 16
- ¹³see Burgin, Victor *The Absence of Presence: Conceptualism and Post Modernisms*, in *The End of Art Theory*, London 1987; 29
- ¹⁴Derrida, Jacques *Speech and Phenomena*, Evanston 1973; 76
- ¹⁵Malamaud, Charles as cited in Kristeva, Julia *Powers of Horror An Essay on Abjection*, (tr. Leon S. Roudiez) N.Y. 1982; 77
- ¹⁶Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 6 . 9 . 2
- ¹⁷see Perniola, Mario in *Between Clothing and Nudity* in Zone Pt. II *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, (ed. Michael Feher with Romona Naddoff and Nadia Tazi, tr. ed. Siri Hustvedt) N.Y. 1989; 237
- ¹⁸Leonardo da Vinci as cited in MacCurdy, Edward *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, N.Y. 1955; 947
- ¹⁹op. cit. Plotinus 4.3.11.
- ²⁰Baudelaire, Charles *Les Fleurs du Mal*
- ²¹Scholem, Gershon *Kabbalah*, N.Y. 1974; 129
- ²²Gombrich, E.H. *Symbolic Image*, London 1972; viii
- ²³St. Hildegard as cited in Singer, Charles *Studies in the History and Method of Science*, Oxford 1917; 33
- ²⁴Schaller de Lubicz, R.A. *Symbols and the Symbolic Ancient Egypt, Science and the Evolution of Consciousness*, (tr. Robert and Deborah Lawlor) N.Y. 1978; 3
- ²⁵see Alliez, Eric and Feher, Michel in *Reflections of a Soul* in Zone pt. II *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, (ed. Michael Feher with Romona Naddoff and Nadia Tazi, tr. ed. Siri Hustvedt) N.Y. 1989; 47
- ²⁶[...] the One, which has no self awareness, no intellection, because its unity has need of the self-consciousness which guarantees the identity of, for example, the twofold Intellect with itself, *ibid.* 19ff. Transcending Being, the One can have no intellection, for 'the first and true Intellection is identical with Being' 36. The One suffices for itself; another passage in another treatise explains that this is the primary, essential self-sufficiency of the wholly simple nature, without lack or need of any kind: and to be distinguished from the secondary level of self-sufficiency, which needs itself, and needs to know itself, V3, 13, 17. see O'Daly, J.P. *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self*, PhD Thesis, University of Bern, Switzerland 1968; 7
- ²⁷op. cit. Plotinus 5. 2. 1. In (Enn. VI) Plotinus undertakes to remind the souls which have forgotten their father-god, of their true origin and nature. First, every soul should contemplate the action of the universal soul as she 'enlivens' the cosmos and rules it. By so doing she will become more aware of her own worth. Afterwards she should realize that she is a kind of word pronounced by intelligence and that her perfection consists in the contemplation of intelligence. Next, she should learn to appreciate the quality of intelligence by comparing it with its image, viz. the visible universe. Eventually, she should ascend to that which is the cause of both intelligizing and being. This cause is that which is simple or one; whereas intelligence is multiple (intelligizing or being, difference and identity, motion and rest, constitutive of number, quantity and quality), see Merlin Philip *Monopsychism Mysticism Metaconsciousness Problems of the Soul in the NeoAristotelean and the NeoPlatonic Tradition*, The Hague, 1963; 4

²⁸Furthermore, our soul should inquire how that which is simple passed into that which is multiple - a problem of old and much discussed - this passing to be understood as a non-temporal 'event' comparable to the warmth emanating from fire, different but not separated from it. *ibid.* 4

²⁹Inge, W.R. *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, London 1929; 203 "For the soul's nature includes many things, indeed everything, the higher and the lower, insofar as life in any form exists," 3,21ff. Each of us is an "intelligible universe" linked both to this world and to its intelligible prototype - a dimension, this latter, to be explored later - what is important is that our souls, containing as they do the possibility of every manifestation of life, are not only an intelligible universe, but "a subordination of various forms like that of the Cosmic Soul", 6, 23. *Op. cit.* O'Daly, Gerard J.P.; 24

³⁰*op. cit.* Plotinus 1.1.2.

³¹*ibid.*

³²*op. cit.* Blanchot; 46

³³*op. cit.* Plotinus 2.9.4.

³⁴*ibid.* 4.3.12.

³⁵*op. cit.* Blanchot; 46

³⁶*op. cit.* Plotinus 5.8.2.

³⁷*ibid.* 1.6.8.

³⁸*op. cit.* Barthes; 40

³⁹*op. cit.* Rilke; 122

⁴⁰*ibid.* 116

⁴¹*ibid.* 120

⁴²*op. cit.* Blanchot; 129

⁴³*op. cit.* Plotinus 1.6.7. and Kristeva, Julia *Tales of Love*, (tr. Leon S. Roudiez) N.Y. 1987; 120

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*Some Thoughts at the End of the Course
in Relation to My Art Practice*

Mad or tame? Photography can be one or the other: tame if its realism remains relative, tempered by aesthetic or empirical habits (to leaf through a magazine at the hairdresser's, the dentist's); mad if this realism is absolute and, so to speak, original, obliging the loving and terrified consciousness to return to the very letter of Time: a strictly revulsive movement which reverses the course of the thing, and which I shall call, in conclusion, the photographic ecstasy.

Such are the two ways of the Photograph. The choice is mine: to subject its spectacle to the civilized code of perfect illusions, or to confront in it the wakening of intractable reality.

Roland Barthes

Photography gathers fragments around what does not exist. As the grandmother stood before the lens, she entered for a second into the spatial continuum which the lens offered. What has been rendered eternal, however, is, instead of the grandmother, the perspective, it makes the observer of old photographs shiver. For they illustrate not knowledge of the original but the spatial configuration of a moment in time....

Sigfried Kracauer

*....but suddenly, a lightning flash,
bright, terrible, a strike
against a heaven from the abyss:
- from the mountain itself the entrails
vibrate....*

Neitzsche

I will make the sun rise. I am the night-watchman who will announce the time to wake up. Night is only a long need for awakening.

Neitzsche

...that very state which has hitherto entered into our soul as an exception, felt with horror now and then, may be the usual condition of those future souls: a continuous movement between high and low, and the feeling of high and low, a constant state of mounting as on steps, and at the same time reposing as on clouds.

Neitzsche

How-to-adjust - the sacred world of continuity to the world of discontinuity which persists?

The divine world has to descend among the world of things....the natural world mingled with the divine....yet it can be readily imagined by anybody whose thought is in tune with the processes of life and death, or if you prefer; those whose thought is dialectic, capable of developing through the reconciling of opposites....or through reverie....'First reverie - or wonder. Wonder is instant reverie.' Then contemplation - a strange power of the human soul capable of recapturing its reveries, beginning its dreams over again and restoring its imaginary life despite the accidents of tangible life. Contemplation brings together more memories than sensations - contemplation becomes an active spectacle.

Bataille explains that in the spectacle of sacrifice in which the sacrificial body dies, the spectators share in what this death reveals. What the onlookers experience in the succeeding timeless silence, is the continuity of all existence with which the body is now one. He says that we would be unable to imagine what goes on in the secret depths of the mind of the bystanders if we did not call on our own personal religious experiences, if only childhood ones.

Continuity is reached when boundaries are lost....

Bataille says that divine continuity is linked with the transgression of the law - the Law of the Father, the Symbolic Law, on which the order of discontinuous beings is built. Individuals as discontinuous beings try to maintain their separate existences, but death, or at least the contemplation of death brings them back to continuity....photographs are the certitude of our future death....our absence....photographs compel a silence too insistent to lie resisted and too ambiguous to be deciphered and definitively interpreted - nothing to offer but a door left ajar - lucid manifestations of the invisible.

The spectacle of sacrifice is an external event which is then transformed into an internal experience. The light of the outside world gives light to the darkness of the inner world. The exterior world recorded in the photographic image is transformed into a visionary inner world. The moment captured drowns in the flow of time whose chronology becomes a monumental history of affective memory. In the fossilised layers of time, the shades of memory glimmer through....could it be the memory of a lost totality? The moment captured becomes a moment of ecstasybut ecstasy cannot be a continuous state....but it can be recalled and stored as memory - in art. Nietzsche suggested in his essay 'The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music' in which he located the origin of art in 'the quest for an orgiastic state'. Art has the power to stimulate memory, thus art and like ecstasy can help

us to transgress the limits of our individuality....which are so disagreeable to the imaginary ego.

In Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) he says of the young ego: 'The ego detaches itself from the external world. Or, to put it more correctly, originally the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself. Our present ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive - indeed an all-embracing - feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it [the last three words are the translation of the German *Umwelt*]. If we may assume that there are many people in whose mental life this primary ego-feeling has persisted to a greater or less degree, it would exist in them side by side with the narrower and more sharply demarcated ego-feeling of maturity, like a kind of counterpart to it. In that case, the ideational contents appropriate to it would be precisely those of limitlessness and of a bond with the universe - the same ideas with which my friend [Romain Rolland] elucidated the 'oceanic' feeling.' (p.68).

*Hail to me....My abyss speaks, I have turned my
ultimate depth inside out into light.*

Nietzsche

....ecstasy moves outside of time; play and art also resist its exorable flow. They are a ray of light, an opening in the otherwise dark wall of passing of time. In photography the camera ruptures the flow of time; a moment captured - an ecstatic moment, a past moment that becomes a co-presence, creating dream images of past experience, evoking memories of a 'polymorphous' form of totality....The light outside fills the darkened chamber of the camera obscura then is transformed into an image - projecting light outwards - a gentle light, which can show us a reality difficult to come to terms with compared with the reality of things; it makes possible a silent awakening. We can then follow the endless movement whose meanderings in the end bring us silently to the awareness of our secret life, our inner life. To get at the innermost depths of our nature we no doubt can go by way of the objects that purport to represent those intimated depths as the poetic knowledge of the world precedes rational knowledge. Our secret experience cannot enter directly the field of our conscious awareness, but at least our consciousness can know just when it shifts out of the way the thing it condemns....that our limits can be transgressed....this inner experience leads to an expansion of consciousness....

To experience an event as image (sacrifice) or to experience an image as an event (the photograph), is not to free oneself of that event, dissociate oneself from it; it is to let

oneself be taken by it, to go from the region of the real, where we hold ourselves at a distance from things - the better to use them, to that other region where distance holds us, this distance which is unliving, unavailable depth, an inappreciable remoteness become in some sense the sovereign power of things....this movement implies infinite degrees.

This representational relatedness is not 'objective' in the way in which, for example, one event is perceived as related to the next in objective time; it is 'subjective' in the sense that we are aware that human imagination establishes, or has established in the past, the representational link between the symbol (the image) and the symbolized - a link that often gives the impression of an imaginative leap.

The event, as image seizes us, that is deprives us, of it and ourselves, keeps us outside, makes this outside a presence where 'I' does not recognize 'itself' - a movement of infinite degrees....From the moment we are outside ourselves - in that ecstasy that which is the image - the 'real' enters an equivocal realm where there is no longer any limit, nor any interval, nor moments, and where each thing, absorbed in the void of its reflection, draws near the consciousness, which has allowed itself to be filled up by an anonymous fullness - the *Fullness of Being*....an erotic plenitude....Thus the universal unity seems recreated. Thus, behind things, the soul of each thing obeys the spells now possessed by the ecstatic man who has abandoned himself to the universe.

In the realm of the imaginary the image can certainly help us to recapture the thing in an ideal way, being, then, its vitalizing negation, but also, on the level we are drawn to by its own weight, constantly threatening to send us back, no longer to the absent thing, but of absence as presence, to the neutral double of the object, in which belonging to this world has vanished.

do we see to imagine....or do we imagine to see

What Marey and Muybridge have done as operators I myself want to do as spectator: I decompose, I enlarge, and, so to speak, I retard, in order to have time to know at last. The Photograph justifies this desire, even if it does not satisfy it: I can have the fond hope of discovering truth only because Photography's noeme is precisely that-has-been, and because I live in the illusion that it suffices to clean the surface of the image in order to accede to what is behind; to scrutinize means to turn the photograph over, to enter into the paper's depth, to reach its other side (what is hidden is for us Westerners more "true" than what is visible).

Roland Barthes - Camera Lucida

If we are willing to live by imagination and for imagination, these hours of pure vision in front of the image, we will be able to understand that imagination offers a domain in which the values of the dream and of the representation are interchangeable on the most basic level. We may feel that the world may be permeated by the most indeterminate reverie. This is when reverie really has depth. The image opens up in depth beneath the dream. Then dreams are not restricted to one dimensional images. Paradoxically the dream soon has only a depth dimension. The world is then truly on the 'otherside' of the image. There is an imaginary beyond, a pure beyond, one without a within. First there is *nothing*, then there is a *deep* nothing, then there is a blue depth....the opposite of the sun of incandescence of the eye and the I....

If we are willing to meditate philosophically, taking as our point of departure not representation but reverie, then the subject's gain is no less than the objects. In front of an image we will be able to seize, in all the significant dynamics of its newly formed state, the subject and the object together. Before the image there will be born an imaginary subject whose memories have been banished. The distant and the immediate form a bond. What is distant from the object is immediate to the subject. This is another proof that the common bond between spirit and matter, is even more perceptible if one is willing to take their stand in the realm of the imagination rather than in that of representation, and if one is willing to study together - imaginary matter and the imaginary mind. For if 'external' perception, amounts to no more than the impressions left by an object in the eye of the beholder, says Plotinus, the 'internal' gaze that the 'realistic' work of art stimulates for its part, expresses the 'soul' of the beholder. The image makes manifest the pure inwardness of mind, of which the soul is the focal point and which finds its true means of expression in light.

For Plotinus, if a work of art is capable of prompting internal vision and if this is projected onto the object contemplated rather than in the subject contemplating it, the spectator from whom the internal vision emanates is oblivious to his own situation and becomes fused

with what he sees. Then there is no longer a point of which one can fix the limits of one self - and say "Up to this point it is me."

In eroticism the person consciously calls his own existence into question. In one sense, the person loses themselves deliberately, but then the subject is identical with the object losing his identity; "I am losing myself." But the deliberate loss of self in eroticism is manifest, no-one can question it (He is "I").

Before the image, reverie can re-discover the alternation of the symbolic and the imaginary, by experiencing the alternating rhythm of the real and the unreal (symbolic and the imaginary), leading to an 'erotic sense of reality'.

Those moments the camera captures, the image it produces can cause a rupture that leads to the interface of two worlds - the known and the unknown, time and space, the rational and irrational, the physical and metaphysical, - in which the distinction between subject and object is transcended and the barriers of selfhood completely broken down - 'moments such as these can reveal to us our true home, from which, however, like departing travellers, we are forever taking leave'(Rilke). For the image, far from leaving us outside of things and making us live in the mode of gratuitous fantasy, seems to surrender us profoundly to ourselves. The image is intimate because it makes our intimacy an exterior power that we can submit to: outside of us, in the backward motion of the world that the image provides, the depths of our passion trails along, astray and brilliant....The image can induce things to awaken as reflection, and consciousness to thicken into a thing.

* * *